

THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS



November 1987

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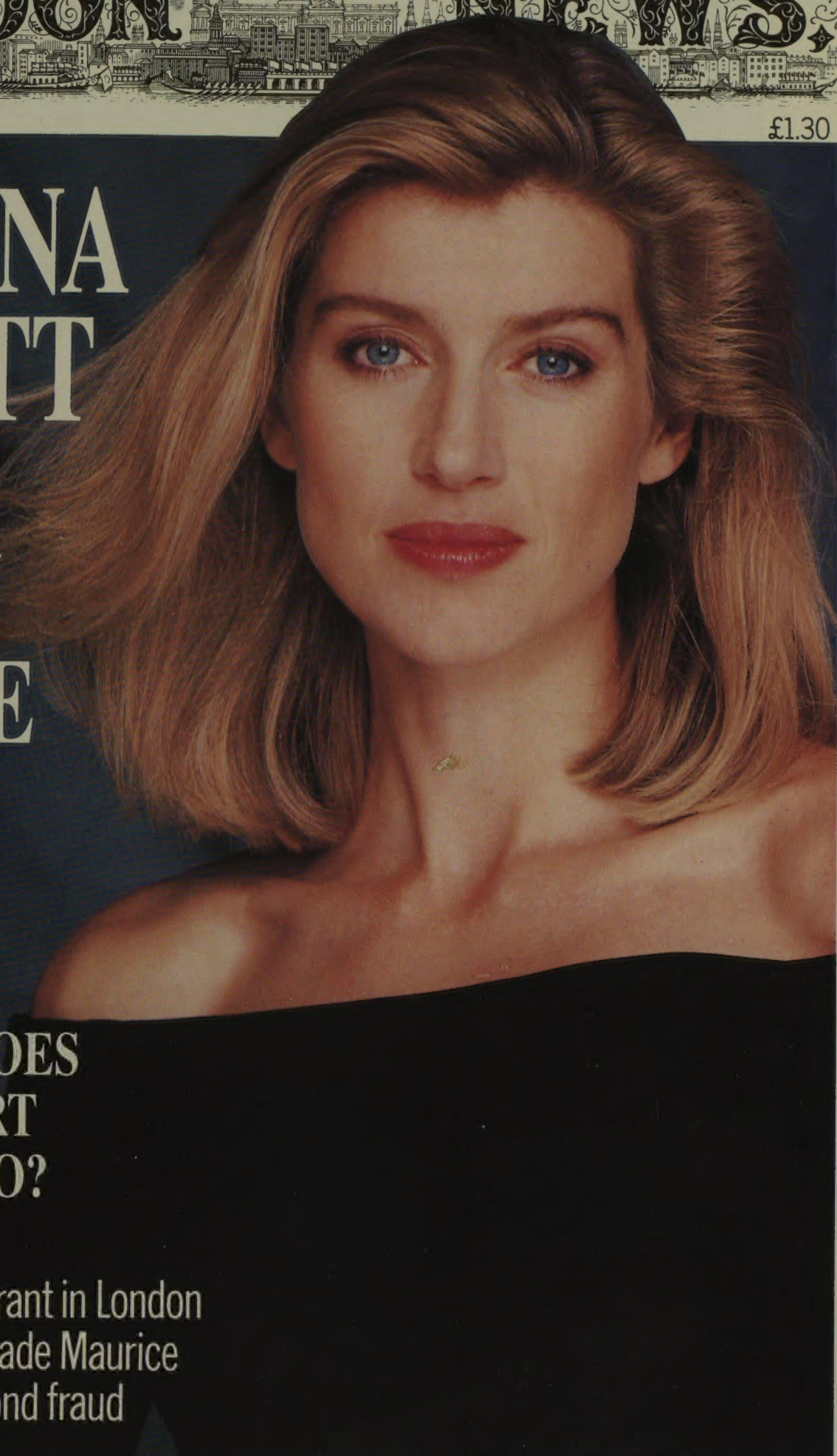
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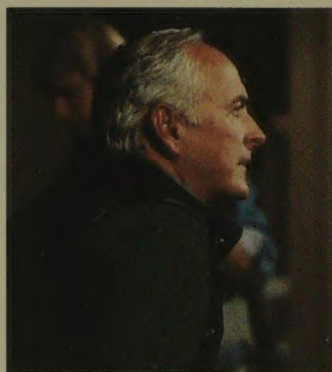
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THE ULTIMATE DRIVING MACHINE

THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS

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Not much of an opposition



Follower Kinnock, leader Thatcher

HAS BRITISH politics ever been quite so dormant? Have today's politicians ever seemed so lacklustre and unimaginative? Certainly one would have to search for a long time in political history to find such directionless and defeated behaviour in the opposition parties. The SDP Liberal Alliance, which only six months ago presented itself as the sensible face of moderation, has descended into an unseemly internecine squabble which will undoubtedly affect the careers of David Steel and David Owen as well as losing support for the centre. The Labour Party is an even more depressing spectacle, its leaders striving to look modern and electable while the rank and file remain locked in an unreal little drama of their own, discussing black sections and the right of women to have priority in party elections.

The most interesting part of the Labour Party conference was the way in which the leadership tied itself in knots by accepting some of the measures brought in by Mrs Thatcher over the last eight years (in particular privatization) at the same time as trying to appeal to the party membership. Suddenly the ideology which has propelled the Labour Party is being compromised by the perceived successes of Mrs Thatcher's government, which is a most peculiar state of affairs. She now determines the subject and conditions of political debate. The Labour Party reacts, but not effectively, and the Alliance continues on its course of slow and dreary suicide.

Even in areas where the Labour Party is traditionally strong, it has lost the ability to set the agenda and to focus public attention on social injustice. It was the Conservative Party which tackled the education mess and made the proposals that most of the Labour Party meekly accept. The Labour Party may have one or two qualms but, broadly speaking, it does not offer an alternative argument.

This must worry senior parliamentarians on both sides of the House, as the Commons returns after the season of party conferences. For a government generally works well when it is being challenged by an astute opposition and furthermore when that opposition produces from its convictions issues which should be addressed by the government. Before Mr Kinnock even thinks of becoming Prime Minister he should first find out how to run the opposition.

In response to remarks I made about London's untidiness in the September issue, Mr Patrick Casey has written a long letter from Japan. As an expatriate who occasionally visits London, he seems to

notice what is causing the general appearance of dilapidation more precisely than we who live here:

1 Overflowing waste bins: people dispose of litter but the bins are infrequently emptied.
2 Piles of plastic bags full of garbage are left outside restaurants. In some cases they almost block the pavement.

3 Milk and bread crates are left on pavements waiting for collection.

4 Dirty street furniture: benches and salt dispensers are coated with grime and frequently in the last stages of collapse.

5 Sign clutter: London's road signs insensitively placed, excessively large, dirty, rusty, bent and carelessly assembled.

6 Builders' waste: rubble and dust are allowed to scatter and road-works are untidily fenced off. Skips should be covered to prevent rubbish scattering in the wind.

It cannot be beyond local government to enforce improvement in all the areas he talks about. As he rightly points out, the situation can be changed by the institution not the individual.

This issue of *The Illustrated London News* places an emphasis on the consumption of good food and wine. On page 39 we introduce a new column by Matthew Fort which aims to inspire the dinner party cooks as well as inform them about the best places to buy ingredients. Kingsley Amis contributes his assessment of Frith's Restaurant on page 37. On preceding pages we announce the winner of *The Illustrated London News* Restaurant of the Year Award.

Elsewhere in the magazine specialist writers dwell on the demise of the Midland Bank and the threat presented to the *Financial Times* in the shape of Rupert Murdoch. The author of the second piece is Louis Heren, once the deputy editor of *The Times*. He is an eloquent advocate for the continuing independence of the *Financial Times*.

Professor Laurie Taylor continues his series about the changing attitudes in British society with a revealing look at crime and the fears the media generate. It is a stimulating and original view which challenges those who believe that our society has never been more violent ○

We hadn't been back to Skye since our honeymoon, but nothing had changed. Lochalsh was just as breathtaking, Helen just as lovely.

"You're still an admirer then?" she said, indicating the Volvo.

"More than ever," I replied fervently, and it was instantly clear that I didn't mean the car.

Which was a little awkward, considering we'd been divorced for nearly three years.

The timely arrival of the ferry saved me from further confusion and we were across the loch and heading for Harlosh before Helen asked the inevitable question.

"So what are you doing here? A sentimental journey?"

"Not at all," I replied a little too quickly. "I had some business in Inverness and, well, it's a chance to try out the car. I only took delivery on Monday."

Helen must have caught a note of pride in my voice, for she snuggled deeper into the leather seats and looked up impishly at me.

"A little extravagant for you, isn't it?"

I refused to rise to the bait.

"It cost £19,800 excluding number plates and delivery," I said mildly.

"For that, I get a 2.3 litre, turbo-charged, fuel-injected engine, capable of speeds far in excess of anything I need these days, but pleasing all the same."

"It's extremely comfortable, as you may have noticed, very reliable and it has a hint of luxury that I not only like, but feel I've earned."

The smile faded from Helen's face.

"Were we part of the price?"

There was no answer to that, so I didn't attempt one. To give myself a breathing space, I slipped a tape into the player and filled the car with Thelonus Monk.



For the next few miles, Helen seemed lost in the music, whilst I was pleasantly absorbed in noting how effortlessly the 760's new suspension coped with the bumpy, twisting mountain road.

And then, inevitably, the nearer we got to Harlosh, the farther back my thoughts drifted.

Thirteen years ago, I had driven down this same road, in the same make of car, with the same girl in the passenger seat.

My first love, my first car. I'd no idea what had happened to the Volvo, but Helen and I had followed a well-trodden path.

We hadn't so much drifted apart as sailed full steam in opposite directions, both of us so busy building our separate careers that one day we found

we'd made separate lives as well.

"Richard?"

Her voice cut through the Monk and the memories and I looked across at her.

"Were you very surprised when you saw me at the ferry?"

I nearly choked.

Surprised? Just because I drive into a remote Scottish port that I haven't visited for thirteen years and find my ex-wife waiting at the dockside, calmly asking for a lift to the hotel where we'd

spent our honeymoon?

"Not at all, I always keep in touch with old friends this way," I said flip-pantly and instantly regretted it when I caught the flash of pain in her eyes.

"I came up here to do some-

search for the rag," she volunteered, "and I suppose the fact that it would have been our anniversary put the idea into my head."

"Anyway, when I saw the Volvo drive up, I thought God, wouldn't it be funny if it was Richard and then when you got out..."

"It wasn't so funny after all," I finished for her.

"Something like that."

There was an odd note in her voice and I waited, wondering what was coming next.

"Do you remember that old Volvo we had?"

I thought of the battered snapshot in my wallet and said nothing.

"No electric sun-roof," she continued, "no electronic climate control, no electronic anything, but it was a sweet little car."

Ahead of me the lights of Harlosh flickered in the gathering gloom,

and I slowed, searching for the turning to the hotel.

"What do you suppose happened to it, Richard?"

"Knowing Volvos," I said casually, "it's probably still going strong."

"Unlike us," murmured Helen in a voice so low I could barely catch it.

I counted silently to three, took a deep breath and plunged.

"We should be there in time for dinner, if you'd care to join me?"

"For old time's sake?" she asked. I shook my head and thought, oh well, in for a penny, etc.

"They say the average life of a Volvo is about twenty-one years," I said carefully.

Helen merely looked at me.

"It occurred to me," I went on, "that if you're not doing anything for the next decade or so, we could put this one to the test."

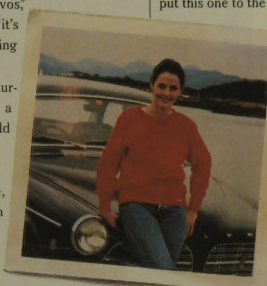
There was a long silence and my heart lurched. Then she said quietly, "I thought you always traded your car in every three years?"

"Usually," I replied and noticed I was gripping the wheel a little too firmly.

"But just lately I've learnt that some things become even more valuable, the longer you hold on to them."

"I am," said Helen, "quite remarkably hungry."

The new Volvo 760 Turbo.





Why not?



Lawson



FOR THE RECORD

Republic declared in Fiji; US and Soviets in arms talks; Americans sink Iranian patrol boats; Sri Lankan massacres end ceasefire; Scottish prisoners riot; Eddery wins Arc

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14

● Iraq urged the UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar to work for sanctions against Iran after his visit to Baghdad. Each country blames the other for being the aggressor in the war.

● Terry Marsh, the world light welterweight boxing champion, announced his retirement from the ring in *The Star* newspaper after discovering that he had been suffering from epilepsy for the past two years.

● Nottinghamshire were the winners of the Britanic Assurance county cricket championship.

● Ivan Lendl beat Mats Wilander 6-7, 6-0, 7-6, 6-4, to win the US Open tennis championships at Flushing Meadow.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16

● Lord Soames, the son-in-law of Winston Churchill, cabinet minister, ambassador to France and Governor of Southern Rhodesia, died aged 66.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

● Liberals voted overwhelmingly at their annual party conference in Harrogate to open merger negotiations with the Social Democrats. David Steel, the Liberal leader, said the theme was now "Onward and upward".

● James Anderton, the Chief Constable of Greater Manchester, said he supported the case for the physical or medical castration of rapists. A spokesman for the Women Against Rape organization said the remarks were insulting and sensationalist.

● Unemployment in the UK fell in August by 40,651 to 2,865,802.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

● The United States and the Soviet Union agreed "in principle" for the first time to draw up a treaty to eliminate all medium and shorter range missiles, or a total of 1,000 deployed by both sides in Europe. The announcement came after a series of meetings between US Secretary of State, George Shultz and the Soviet Foreign Minister, Eduard Shevardnadze in Washington.

● The FBI said it had asked New York City librarians to look out for and inform on library users who might be recruiting spies.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

● Alijandro, secretary-general of the Philippine New People's Alliance coalition, was shot dead by unknown gunmen in the Manila suburb of Quezon City. A prominent left-wing leader, he had just given a press conference calling for a national strike to protest against the increasing

militarization of Corazon Aquino's government.

● Lebanon's warring factions announced a three-day ceasefire to enable Unicef, the United Nations children's fund, to inoculate the country's 350,000 children against six diseases including polio and tuberculosis. The ceasefire was officially described as "three days of tranquility".

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20

● The US magazine *Fortune* published a league table of the world's billionaires. Top of the list was the Sultan of Brunei, who is said to be worth £15 billion. King Fahd of Saudi Arabia was second (£12 billion) and in third place Sam Moore Walton (£5.3 billion) founder of a chain of American discount stores. The Queen was fifth with £4.5 billion.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

● The British-registered oil tanker *Gentle Breeze* was set on fire after an attack by an Iranian missile boat manned by revolutionary guards. One crewman was killed. Mrs Thatcher described the raid as "absolutely outrageous" and said Britain would protest to the UN, while President Reagan described it as "symbolic of their barbarism". The following day two US helicopters from the frigate *USS Jarrett* attacked an Iranian vessel which they said had been laying mines in waters north-east of Bahrain. Five Iranians were killed and the ship was captured. President Bahrein of Iran denounced the operation as an "abominable act" and threatened retaliation. On September 23 Douglas Hurd, the Home Secretary, said he was closing down Iran's arms-purchasing operation in London.

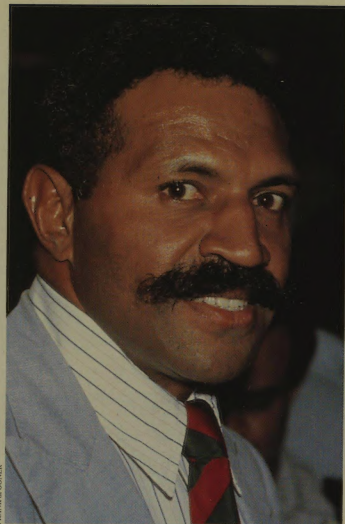
● Liverpool's 47 dismissed Labour councillors agreed to pay a £348,000 surcharge and legal bills arising from their rate rebellion against the Government.

● British Airways said they had ordered thousands of pairs of plastic handcuffs to use on unruly passengers.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

● Rupert Murdoch, head of the News Corporation, said he had built up a 14.9 per cent stake in Pearson, the information, entertainment and industrial group. Journalists on the *Financial Times*, also part of the group, said that they would be mounting a campaign to maintain editorial independence.

● The Government announced that soaring imports in August led > 14



FRANK SPENCER

Paradise goes republic

FIJI SEVERED a 113-year link with the monarchy when a former Fijian rugby international declared the island group a republic on October 6. Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka, the 39-year-old commander of the Fijian armed forces, seized power after staging his second coup in five months. The two coups stemmed from a resentment among ethnic Fijians against those of Indian background. The golf-mad colonel took several days to make any kind of firm decision on forming a republic but when he did the army band played "Congratulations". Protests flooded in but Rabuka said, "It's simply their lack of understanding for the Melanesian way of thinking." ○



PAUL ELLIS/MAGNUM

A world of extremes

IT'S A mad, bad world even in San Francisco and Tehran, two cities not noted for doing things in moderation. Gays and lesbians were out in force during Pope John Paul II's visit to San Francisco on September 16 to protest against the Roman Catholic church's stand on various social



STUART NISCH

Master of the courts

LORD DENNING, the former Master of the Rolls, pictured with his wife, made an appearance in front of Andover magistrates on September 28 to argue the case of villagers who wanted to maintain a footpath. He last appeared in a magistrates' court in 1927 but had lost none of his

mastery of common law. His adversary in court, Ted Mason, remarked, "Lord Denning is the most tenacious correspondent in these matters, very much like a terrier on every point." Lord Denning won an agreement from the council that part of the footpath would be maintained. Lord Denning is now in demand. He made a second appearance a week later in a dispute over another ancient track ○



issues. More than 2,000 took to the streets, with many opting for the bizarre or the kinky to draw attention to their discontent. Yet all their complaints appeared misguided. The Pope, though encouraging charity for all people, emphasized that even practising homosexuals should not be excluded from the church. Later he met a group of Aids sufferers and said, "God loves you all, without distinction." In Iran the number of

countries depicted in their rogues' gallery of most hated nations is increasing. The lurid caricatures on Tehran's city walls were started in the early 1980s and include all those whom they see as being in league with Satan. Pictured above are a Russian bomber pilot, President Reagan, Margaret Thatcher and President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. Only Syria and Libya look to be safe from the Mullahs' murals ○



The snake that failed to charm

THE DUCHESS of York, who has found that learning to fly and shooting the Canadian rapids present few problems, showed that quite the opposite is the case when a snake is around, particularly when it is a 12 foot Burmese python. The Duchess burst into tears when a naturalist produced the offending reptile at a charity lunch in Connecticut. ○



The gasman cometh not

JEAN-MARIE Le Pen, the leader of the French National Front, who claimed that the "Nazi gas chambers were just a detail" of the last war, decided not to inflict his views on the British public when he cancelled a visit to the Conservative Party conference. Le Pen threatened to return when "the conditions for democratic debate were present". ○



Eddery triumphs on outsider

IRISH JOCKEY Pat Eddery achieved a fourth success in the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe when he rode *Tremolino* to victory in record time on October 4. The 21-1 outsider, trained by the young Frenchman André Fabre, stormed clear in the straight to finish two lengths ahead of the Italian horse *Tony Bin*, with the French-trained filly *Triptych* in third. It was also Eddery's third consecutive win in the race—*Rainbow Quest* in

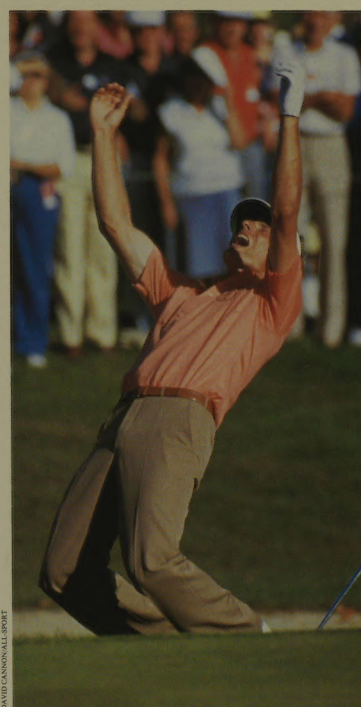


By the skin of their teeth

CAPTAIN MARK Phillips and Keith Best, the former Conservative MP, both had close shaves with the law. Captain Phillips was fined £140 for speeding at 104mph but he escaped a ban. Best had a prison sentence for dishonestly attempting to obtain shares quashed by the Court of Appeal. Lord Lane said Best had "escaped by the skin of his teeth". ○



1985 and *Dancing Brave* last year. The biggest disappointment for the thousands of English racegoers at Longchamp was the failure of the Derby and St Leger winner *Reference Point* to show any kind of form. Jockey Steve Cauthen may have set him off at too quick a pace but the colt was beginning to go over the top after a long season. Trainer Henry Cecil later said that the horse had an abscess in his foot which affected him 3 furlongs from home. *Reference Point*, who was odds-on favourite for the race, will now be retired to the Dalham Hall Stud at Newmarket. ○

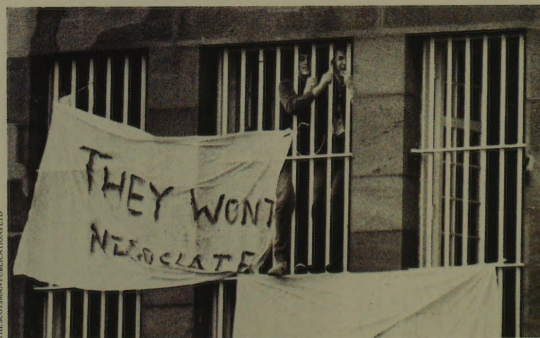


Golfing first

BERNHARD LANGER celebrates during the first ever Ryder Cup victory by the Great Britain and Europe team over the United States on American soil. Tony Jacklin's 12-man team won three and halved two at Muirfield Village, Ohio. ○

Prisoners' revolt

AN INMATE threatened another man with a knife at Perth prison on October 5 as Scotland witnessed its third prison siege in nine days and its sixth since the beginning of the year. Prisoners' complaints ranged from brutality to changes in the parole system. The Government continues to blame "a small number of vicious criminals". ○



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FOR THE RECORD

10 <1 to a record £929 million deficit in the UK balance of payments.

● A Japanese chemical company claimed they had developed an odourless garlic.

● Bob Fosse, the US director and choreographer who made *Cabaret* and *All That Jazz*, died aged 60.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

● George Galloway, the Labour MP for Glasgow Hillhead, announced he was standing down as general secretary of War on Want, after revelations about his sex life and questions about his expenses.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27

● Labour left-winger Linda Bellos, speaking at a fringe meeting in Brighton, said that Margaret Thatcher was leading Britain down the road to "the gas chambers". Roy Hattersley, Labour's deputy leader, described the statement as ridiculous.

● At least 500 people were thought to have been killed after a landslide buried part of a shanty town in Medellin, Colombia.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28

● Ken Livingstone, the Labour MP for Brent East, was elected to the national executive together with Bryan Gould, shadow trade minister, during the party conference in Brighton. The conference also backed Neil Kinnock's desire to review Labour's programme for government and to ensure that it is "attractive, imaginative and responsive to the concerns of working people and the relevant needs of Britain in the 1990s".

● A High Court judge in Canberra rejected a British Government plea to extend the injunction on Peter Wright's book *Spycatcher*. The publishers, Heinemann of Australia, said they would now rush ahead with a 50,000 print run and would hope to sell the rights to a printer in the Common Market. On October 8 *Spycatcher* went on sale in Ireland for £13.50.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

● Marla Hanson, a New York model, was awarded \$78 million in damages by a Manhattan jury after a razor attack by two men left her face permanently scarred. However, the award was more symbolic than financial as the two men and the man who hired them, a jealous landlord, have no money. Miss Hanson had sought \$500,000 in lost earnings.

● An Italian who had worked for 10 years as a brain surgeon and had just been appointed as chief neurological surgeon at a hospital in Alessandria, was suspended as it was discovered that he had never qualified as a doctor.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30

● Donald Trump, the New York real-estate magnate, paid \$30 million for a 286 foot yacht which once belonged to Adnan Khashoggi and which featured in the movie *Never Say Never Again*.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1

● Seven people were killed after an earthquake measuring 6.1 on the Richter scale shook Los Angeles. More than 100 people were injured as the tremor caused fires and landslides. On October 4 a further 50 people were

injured during powerful aftershocks throughout the city.

● At least six people were killed during a riot in Lhasa, Tibet on China's national day. The Government blamed supporters of the Dalai Lama for trying to "split the motherland". On October 5 Buddhist leaders claimed China had ruled their country violently and appealed to the UN for support. On October 8 China ordered all foreign journalists to leave Tibet.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 5

● At least 10 Tamil guerrillas committed suicide by swallowing cyanide pills while they were in government custody. During the following three days more than 160 Sinhalese civilians were killed during several attacks by Tamil separatists in eastern Sri Lanka. The massacres ended the two-month agreement with India aimed at ending the ethnic conflict. By October 12, 18 Indian soldiers from the peace-keeping force and 200 Tamils were reported to have been killed. At least 250 suspected terrorists were also arrested.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7

● A monkey aboard a Soviet satellite started tampering with equipment during a mission to test weightlessness in animals. The monkey, called Yer-osha ("trouble-maker"), escaped from his chair but Tass omitted to comment on his condition when the capsule returned to earth the following week.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8

● US helicopters attacked and sank three Iranian patrol boats in the Gulf. The Pentagon said another helicopter had earlier come under fire and the boats were seen as "a clear hostile threat".

● The jury at the inquest into the deaths of 188 people in the Zeebrugge ferry disaster decided that all but one had died unlawfully. The verdict raised the prospect of criminal prosecutions and the inquiry criticized three of the crew, including the captain, but also said that the ferry company, Townsend Thoresen, was infected with "a disease of sloppiness".

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9

● Mrs Thatcher, speaking at the Conservative Party conference in Blackpool, said that she had brought about a "national revival" through her radical policies and that the June election victory was "only a staging post on a much longer journey".

● The Government announced that the inflation rate fell to 4.2 per cent in September from 4.4 per cent.

● Sir Jack Lyons, the financier, was remanded on £500,000 bail at Bow Street magistrates' court on nine charges including the alleged theft of £3.25 million from Guinness.

● An Iranian lift mechanic, George Asfahani, who once wrote a cheque to win his release from Lebanon kidnappers and then cancelled it when he was freed, was kidnapped again in Beirut, allegedly by the same group.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10

● Three wine-makers from Sicily drowned after falling into a 264 gallon tank of fermenting grape juice ○

—SIMON HORSFORD



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HIGHLIGHTS

Lessons on the City; fortunes, fame
and the boat race as Runyon might have seen them



THE COLUMN

Big bangs and little boats

IN THESE post-Big Bang days we all have to learn about high finance, so I am reading a history of Wall Street written by someone called Runyon who seems to be some sort of financial analyst. He is writing about a lady investor who went by the nickname of "Your Highness" and was the terror of Wall Street in the great days, and this is what he writes:

"No one can deny that Your Highness does very good for herself by specializing in characters of means. They are always taking her nice places and she has fine clothes and fur wraps and other odds and ends such as these characters dearly love to bestow on chorus Judys for the asking, and Your Highness is not at all tongue-tied when it comes to asking...

"The price is eight to five anywhere along Broadway that Your Highness will sooner or later marry the United States Mint or maybe the Bank of England, and 20 to one that she will make either of them sick of her in two weeks..."

I never did find out who Your Highness married, but the talk in the capital these days is all about money and I do know that the Bank of England is feeling a little bit sick. It is feeling sick about the relentless expansion of consumer credit, which means the little people like you and me with our credit-card lifestyles. Though why the Bank of England should complain, when they are the people who made up the rules and more or less ordered us all to go into debt, is one of those mysteries of high finance which I will never understand.

But the Bank is also feeling sick

about the big people who splash their money about, buying this and selling that and generally putting senior stockbrokers off their golf game. Be honest, now. Until recently had you ever heard of Mountleigh (the company) or Clegg (the man) who offered £2 billion for Terence Conran's Habitat-Mothercare empire? Or Benlox, who did the same, though they are capitalized at a paltry £40 million? Things have come to a pretty pass when a chap like Terence has to interrupt his summer holiday in France to fend off the corporate raiders. Is there no decency left?

It is a sort of big money disease, this take-over business, and it is contagious. But if much of the recent market activity has been unexpected, the *really* unexpected thing is that some very big money indeed has been keeping quiet. Where is T. Boone Pickens, the American predator? Where Lord Hanson, Jacob Rothschild, Gerald Ronson? These are the dogs which have yet to bark.

Talking of American predators, the Getty foundation in California have lured Marina Warner away for a year (to talk about the Virgin Mary, the *other* Madonna), with money of course and who can blame her? Another friend, 26-year-old Matthew Freeman—first-class degree from Oxford, PhD in biochemistry from Imperial College—has also gone, in his case to Stamford, where they will provide him with a handsome salary and a state-of-the-art laboratory. We have the talent, but they have the moolah.

London life will be poorer

without such people. I met Marina in Vietnam—some stars shine through even the darkest nights—and she has since become a celebrated scholar, author and art critic.

There's fame for you. But the highest sort of fame must be when you are just known by a single, first name. You know the sort of people I mean. Adolf. Bianca. Madonna. Marilyn. Maybe Rupert? Now *that* would be a bit unexpected.

And what about Dan? You know, he of the boat race, trainer of Oxford, who even wrote for *The Illustrated London News* in March this year? The other evening I was sitting in my local eatery, minding my own business, when I see this couple at a table across the room who appear to be very fond.

Well, they turn out to be nobody but Danny Topolski and Susie. I am astonished to see them because at this time of year Danny likes to be catching his death on the Thames trying to make the Oxford rowers shift their boat more quickly than the Cambridge rowers.

Oxford always win because Danny is an internationalist and likes to have a lot of Americans in

his boat, and Danny knows which of the Americans are good at rowing because he only picks the ones who have already won the Olympics. These Americans are all at Oxford for their post-graduate theses in particle physics or sometimes glottochronology.

But last year there is a big rebellion among these scholars because it seems there are so many of them, maybe 500, that they cannot all get into the boat because the boat is only big enough to take eight of them, and anyway, putting 500 people in the boat is definitely against the rules. So Danny has to leave some of them out, and they figure they do not come all the way from California to be told to sit on the bank and keep nice and dry, so they kick Danny out instead.

Danny is sorrowful at this, and tells me he is going to China to get a boat of his own and retrace Marco Polo's route *back* to Venice.

But I am sorrowful too, because I will not be able to score a million on this year's boat race. Last year I had a lovely bet on Oxford at eight to five, but a City type I know said there were no such odds as eight to five and what did I know about big money anyway? ○

—JOHN GRAHAM





POST HOUSE HOTEL
PLYMOUTH

Towering high over Plymouth Hoe, where Drake played bowls before routing the Spanish Armada, is the Mayflower Post House. The name recalls the departure of the Pilgrim Fathers in 1620 from the harbour below. The menu in the panoramic restaurant is enhanced by the view of Plymouth Sound.



TWO BREWERS, CHIPPERFIELD.

Dating from the 17th Century, the hotel overlooks the church and cricket green of this historic pastoral Hertfordshire village on the edge of the Chilterns.

Chipperfield is in the heart of the countryside, yet it's the ideal business venue because it's just off the A41, within easy reach of London, the M1, M25, M40 and M4. The Two Brewers was once a training headquarters for bare knuckle fighters but today's visitors more often wear white as they walk off the cricket pitch and into the oak-beamed bar.



THE LION
SHREWSBURY

High on Wyle Cop (Welsh for hill top) The Lion was called the King of England's Inn when originally built in the 14th Century. It has accommodated many famous visitors to this historic Shropshire town on the River Severn, near the Welsh border.

William IV danced here. Paganini played in the Adam-style assembly rooms. Dickens occupied two of its many charming rooms and De Quincey wrote his 'Confessions of an Opium Eater' here.



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The view shown here is of Knightsbridge where nearly every shop is a name in fashion or beauty. Harrods is only a short walk away.



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The Chaumets, en famille: "It was diamonds that did it; allied to greed, of course, and supreme confidence"

SCANDAL

Diamonds gone for ever

THE PLACE VENDÔME in Paris secretes behind its elegant stone façades a clutch of banks and jewellers, the Ritz Hotel and the Ministry of Justice. They have all come together in the spectacular collapse and ruin of the 10th generation of the most celebrated family of bauble sellers in France.

The Chaumets at No 12 have been selling jewels since 1780. Napoleon was among their earlier clients: they made his Imperial

crown. Their modern clientele has included King Hassan of Morocco, President Mobutu of Zaïre and the man who presides over No 13, Justice Minister Chalandon. There will not be any more.

Jacques and Pierre Chaumet have exchanged the Place Vendôme for the prison of Fleury-Mérogis. Reckless dealings in precious stones have left them owing clients and banks around £230 million, and their affairs have

involved the Banque Nationale de Paris at No 7, Morgan Guaranty Trust at No 14 and l'Européenne de Banque at No 21. For 2.3 billion francs, it has been pointed out, you could buy a diamond as big as No 15, the Ritz.

Whatever else they have been accused of (and that is a lot, including bankruptcy through the use of ruinous means, multiple fraud and abuse of confidence), nobody can say that the Chaumets

thought small. The missing amount is equivalent to almost five times their annual turnover or 23 times what would have been a reasonable annual profit. At their height, the brothers were running what was in effect a bank with a business as large as some rather more orthodox counting-houses.

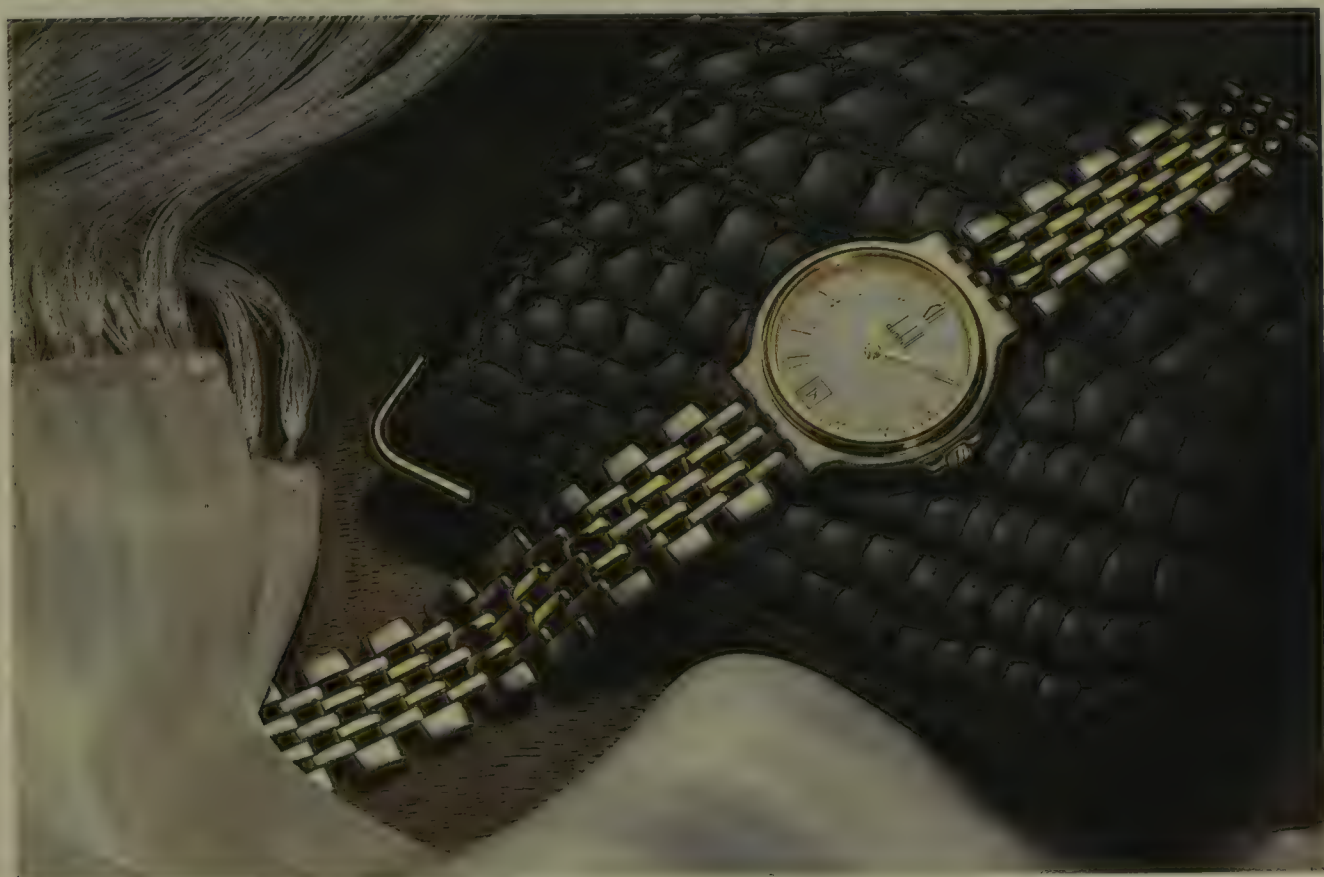
It was diamonds that did it for them. Allied to greed, of course, and supreme confidence that they would not be touched because they were dealing with some of the world's biggest names.

We are not dealing with misguided youth getting its hands on the family business and deciding it was smarter than the previous nine generations. Jacques is 60 and brother Pierre is 58. The family is sober and *grand-bourgeois*. No flash villas on the Côte d'Azur but holidays on the sands of Arcachon. No wild gambling. The brothers played golf and shot clay pigeons. Jacques was president of the Haute Joaillerie de France, a former member of the consultative council of the Bank of France. Pierre was an adviser to the External Trade Ministry, in recognition of his work in bringing petro-dollars to France, a collector of fine furniture and a personal friend of the Prime Minister, Jacques Chirac.

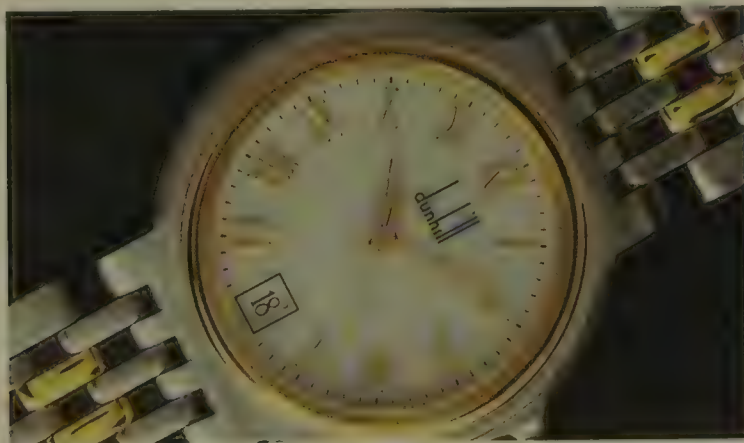
Nor were their clients dumbos who had just come into fortunes and were waiting to be relieved by the first con man who hove into sight. King Hassan and President Mobutu are both smart enough to have survived several attempted coups and assassination attempts. Indeed, one of the reasons that Pierre Chaumet was so close to Hassan was that he was with the king during the murderous bid to take Hassan's life at Skirat in 1971. Yet Hassan is believed to have gone down for £22 million and Mobutu for £10 million. And Albin Chalandon, as the Minister of Justice, should know a thing or two about the sort of people who wind up in Fleury-Mérogis, since No 13 is responsible for them. Chalandon's family is some £630,000 worse off.

The Chaumets developed their ambitions at the end of the 1970s. The diamond market was booming as prices climbed steadily. The brothers persuaded clients to invest in the stones, promising a high rate of tax-free return through their knowledge of the market. Since the Geneva branch of Chaumet is around £100 million in the red, it appears that the brothers were also a conduit for

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dunhill

transferring funds out of France.

The socialist victory in the 1981 elections led to a flood of money leaving France. Diamonds, for which the brothers produced the briefest and most discreet receipts, often in code, were a much more satisfactory way of getting funds into Switzerland than stuffing the car boot full of cash. When the French tax and customs authorities began to pressure Swiss banks into releasing details of French account-holders, the procedure was reversed: diamonds bought in Switzerland were transferred back to France.

However, in the early 1980s the over-heated diamond market began to collapse. Prices were now falling by 20 per cent a year and more. The drop in the price of oil and the plunge in the dollar stripped them of rich Middle Eastern and American bauble-buyers. All the jewellers in the Place Vendôme, Van Cleef & Arpels at No 22, Cartier at No 23,

Boucheron at No 26, felt the cold. But the Chaumets were locked into interest payments to clients of from 15 to 20 per cent a year.

In the classic spiral, they were now borrowing to pay interest on borrowings that had also been made to pay interest. They raised money from banks on false bills of sale. It is alleged that they seized jewels lodged with them for sale by clients and colleagues. These include Alexandre Reza of Reza Gem at No 21 who is suing for the disappearance of jewels worth £1 million. The French customs were also taking an intense interest in the Chaumets' affairs in Geneva.

By the end of last year, they ran out of fresh sources of funds. Chalandon's wife, Princess Salome Murat, had sold her family jewels to the brothers. The princess's niece is married to Jacques Chaumet's son. The agreement was for payment in monthly instalments of £50,000. The last payment was made in December.

In January, Jean Poniatowski, a cousin of a former Interior Minister and a director of *Vogue*, called at the Place Vendôme to collect a necklace, a family heirloom, that had been left at Chaumet's for safe-keeping. "They told me that it had been sold in November," he said. "They didn't even seem to know for how much. I demanded a cheque but when I presented it at the bank they told me that they were not paying out on the Chaumet account any more."

Chalandon's Justice Ministry was nevertheless slow to act. An inquiry started only after *Le Canard Enchaîné*, the French equivalent of *Private Eye*, ran a story on the rapidly approaching bankruptcy of the brothers in May. The brothers were arrested in June and the next month what was left of their business was sold to a Saudi-American holding company.

Although suits by Swiss credi-

tors have been rolling in, there have been very few in France. Only those sore in pocket but pure in deed, like the Chalondons and Poniatowski, have revealed their losses. The great bulk, it is assumed, are remaining mum because they have broken tax and customs regulations and could therefore face prosecution and scandal themselves.

Rumours abound and include some of the better known names of France. Towards the end, it is alleged that the brothers were scribbling details of their ever more complicated transactions on scraps of paper in a numerical code and stuffing them into their (Louis XV) desk drawers.

Should these codes be cracked (the rumour mills have it that there is too much at stake politically for this to happen, but then of course they would), Albin Chalandon's Justice Ministry is going to have a field day ○

—WILLIAM DASHIEL

BOOKS

Francis comes a cropper



EVEN THE Queen Mother, I fear, will be disappointed. Dick Francis is her favourite author, it is said, and she has been lucky enough to have an annual offering to take on holiday with her for the past quarter century. This time, though, something has gone badly wrong. It is not just that *Hot Money* is not quite as good as some of his previous offerings. Francis's 25 books have inevitably included a few that have not come up to the expected standard. But *Hot Money* (Michael Joseph) is in a different league altogether,

almost as if it had been written by someone else.

I am not seriously suggesting that, of course, but the difference in quality is so marked that extravagant explanations come to mind. Francis's success has been based on two main factors: he is an excellent story-teller and he describes the racing world where his stories are based with total authenticity. When both these attributes fail him at the same time, the result is disaster.

The plot is a complicated mess. Malcolm Pembroke is an un-

pleasant, very rich gold trader, "a creature of tempest and volatility", with an active and complicated matrimonial career. His fifth wife, Moira, was found with her head in garden compost; Pembroke himself is the target of murderous intentions. Enter our hero, his favourite but estranged son Ian. A quick reconciliation, and Ian is on the job investigating Moira's demise and the attempts on his father.

Convincing characterization has never been Francis's strongest quality, but it has not mattered much in his other books because the surrounding formula worked so well. When the rest creaks, though, Francis's weakness in drawing characters who are believable and sympathetic becomes apparent. Ian, like all Francis's heroes, is honest, tough, stubborn, emotionally bruised and vulnerable. Unlike his predecessors, he is totally insipid and uninteresting. He never engages us; we do not much care what happens to him.

He has, admittedly, a problem which Francis has foisted on him. His father's dalliances and marriages have produced nine children, which means a list of suspects which no self-respecting amateur sleuth—or reader—should be saddled with.

Still, the regular Francis reader who may not have been caught up with the development of the plot knows that there are at least

exciting scenes of the turf to look forward to. Sorry, but not this time. Francis disappoints us again. The former jockey's skill at evoking the atmosphere of the racing game, the special feel of a race-course, and the pumping adrenalin of jockey and horse at full stretch lunging for the finishing post, seems to have deserted him. He takes us racing, but he is a perfunctory host, going through the motions without his usual passion.

Hot Money is quite simply a book written on automatic pilot. Some thriller writers can occasionally get away with it, for a time, but Francis cannot. Perhaps he has had so many other calls on his time that he has not been able to put in the required hours of planning and concentration; or perhaps he has finally run out of energy and ideas. It happens, and after 25 years it would be neither surprising nor in the least shameful if the well had finally run dry, the spark of inventiveness extinguished.

It is a great irony and injustice that *Hot Money* has jumped straight to number one in the best-seller lists, and has made Francis more money than any other book he has written. I hope he has the wisdom to judge his books by standards other than financial; it would be very sad if he produced another second-rate novel next year ○

—MARCEL BERLINS



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this wine is the product of young vines which,
at their prime, will make
the Léoville Las Cases of the future.*





JOHN GLASHEN

OUT & ABOUT

Temple of horrors

FREEMASONS' HALL looms, like a cross between a mausoleum and a giant wedding-cake, on a triangle of traffic-girdled land in Long Acre. Mysterious, gloomy, exhaust-encrusted, it is the focus for the world's oldest secular fraternity, the Freemasons, and venue for certain esoteric men-only rituals so shrouded in secrecy that women's knees knock when they cross the threshold to join in the recently introduced conducted tours.

When I arrived, "on the hour", I joined a little throng of overseas brethren and one female "Shriner" (a Freemasoness, in no way recognized by the brethren). We were greeted by a Mr Wolsey and conducted past mud-coloured marble columns where the personal standards of former Grand Masters dangled above our heads, past the Grand Officers' robing hall and along a marble-floored processional corridor where few female feet have ever trod. The air smelt of brilliantine, halitosis and furniture polish. The sepulchral silence was broken by the amplified "clack clack" of the Shriner's high-heels ringing on the marble mosaics and by Mr Wolsey's hushed commentary.

"The 40-yard-long corridor is lined with mahogany inlaid with walnut and keeps 30 lady polishers busy," he explained, shining his

torch on to the grim mahogany wall-panels and up to the gloomy stained glass windows depicting the four Cardinal Virtues. "Gee whizz. How much did this place cost?" queried one of the brethren (from Texas), masticating emotionally on chewing-gum. "1.6 million in 1940," replied Mr Wolsey. "You're talking pounds?" exclaimed the Texan, shaking his head so violently that dandruff flakes floated in the beam of Mr Wolsey's torch. "Jeez. If this place was up for grabs in the States you couldn't put any price on it today. Must be worth billions..."

By now we were standing, awed and blue-tinted from a surfeit of stained glass, before the bronze war memorial shrine with its two flanking "columns of light" which, Mr Wolsey explained, was built by a Brother, Walter Gilbert (1871-1946). "The design incorporates symbols connected with the themes of Peace and Eternal Life," said Mr Wolsey. "At the four corners of the shrine stand pairs of winged Seraphim carrying golden trumpets, the four gilded figures portray Moses, Joshua, Solomon and St George..." It was the sort of shrine that Queen Victoria would have loved. Cecil B. de Mille would have been in raptures over it. The Texan shook his head, and masticated, and murmured "Wowee" several times. The

Shriner caught my eye and jiggled her eyebrows up and down.

Up beamed Mr Wolsey's torch to the elaborate ceiling upon which the Freemason's motto Hear! See! Be Silent! was picked out in ornate lettering. This motto struck me as most inappropriate for a journalist, for example, and I was just about to inquire how many journalist Freemasons there are when Mr Wolsey drew everyone's attention to an elaborate floor pattern with a colourful six-pointed central star inlaid with lapis lazuli. We all stood on it. Images of Denis Wheatley's *The Devil Rides Out* sprang to mind. It would have come as no surprise suddenly to spot Christopher Lee lurking behind a marble pillar or see the Prince of Darkness himself burst up through the lapis lazuli star with red smoke swirling from flared nostrils.

Instead, Mr Wolsey did a little skip and pointed to the great bronze doors of the Grand Temple. The gum-chewing Texan fidgeted with his camera. We were all hearing, seeing and being silent except the Shriner who demanded to know the meanings of the sacred symbols and allegorical reliefs carved on both sides of the great doors. Mr Wolsey explained that they were of "inward-looking mystical design full of spiritual significance", that each door weighs 1½ tons and that the pair of figures the Shriner was running her hands over represented David and Jonathan, and symbolize brotherly love.

"They also symbolize homosexuality" volunteered the Shriner shrilly. The gum-chewing Texan coughed. The brethren gazed studiously up at the celestial canopy on the ceiling surrounded by a deeply coffered and richly decorated border. "Do you have homosexual Freemasons?" pursued the Shriner. "Well, I've never come across any of that myself," replied Mr Wolsey, slightly flustered, ushering us into the Grand Temple which, he informed us, was 123 feet long, 90 feet wide, 62½ feet high and accommodates 1,724 brethren. "I don't know what official Masonic policy is on homosexuals, but I'd certainly steer clear of any such brethren myself."

A tense silence ensued. We wandered round the Grand Temple, gazed up at the Ever-watching Eye, St George slaying the dragon, Solomon, Hiram, and organ pipes which, on highly ritualistic occasions, vibrate with the

secret melodies of the Masonic opening and closing odes.

"Note the gilt throne with its canopy of hand-woven silk damask and gold and silver embroidery, 250 stitches to the inch worked by ladies in Brintree," said Mr Wolsey. The Shriner muttered something that sounded suspiciously like "chauvinist mumbo-jumbo" several times. To smooth things over I inquired whether Freemasons have difficulties combining their frequent Masonic rituals with humdrum marital routines. Mr Wolsey chuckled. "We give the ladies a very nice time on social nights and such like to make things up to them. Oh, dear me, yes. The highlight of the Masonic year is our annual ladies' festival, a jolly dinner/dance affair..."

As we all traipsed out of the Grand Temple I asked Mr Wolsey to explain what exactly Freemasons do. Everyone knows that they do secret handshakes and make secret signs and are considered, by some, to indulge in Moonie-type brainwashing, but what do they actually do? Mr Wolsey did not hesitate: "The three great Masonic principals are Brotherly Love, Relief (charity) and Truth. From its earliest days Freemasons have been concerned with the care of orphans, the sick, the aged..." And what about suggestions that Freemasons are corrupt in so far as they protect only each other's interests? That policemen should be excluded from a fraternity whose motto is Hear! See! Be Silent! "That has been a basic misunderstanding," replied Mr Wolsey, steering up towards the museum where he handed us leaflets entitled *Freemasonry and Society*. "All the 'you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours' philosophy goes against the grain and against the basic Masonic rules." He added that the only essential qualification for membership is the belief in a Supreme Being, not necessarily the Christian God, and that the Duke of Kent was installed as the current Grand Master in 1967.

There was just time to peer into glass display cases of ritual swords, an ancient Egyptian mason's mallet from Memphis, a ceramic pyramid made to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the formation of the Lodge d'Amitié Sans Fin, a provincial Grand Master's collar jewel, and a collection of Masonic glassware. Mr Wolsey pointed out the Masonic jewels made from a bombed bus

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Almost immediately John Smith's grandson George (who was by now guardian of the precious dram) took out the first licence in the Highlands under the new Act.

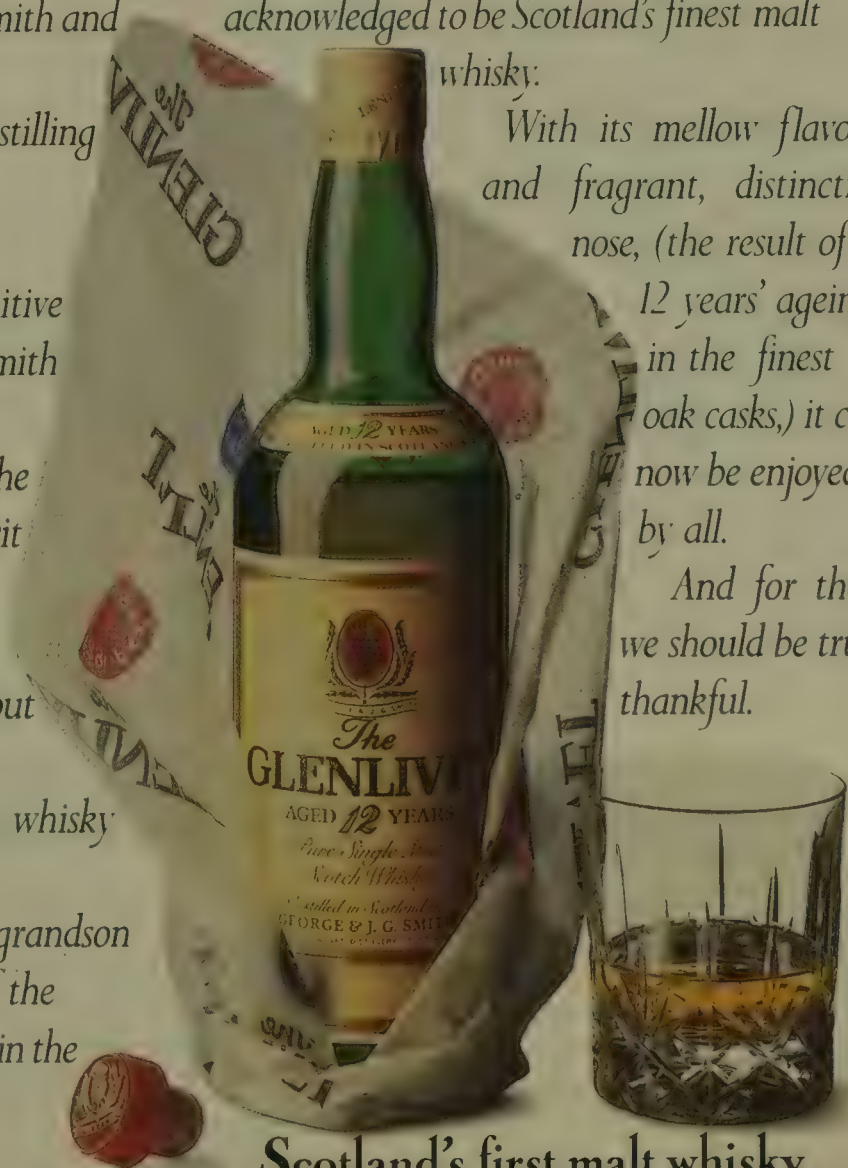
This caused much anger amongst George's neighbours, who branded him a traitor and threatened to burn the distillery to the ground with him inside.

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Scotland's first malt whisky.

by prisoner-of-war Freemasons who met clandestinely in Changi jail, Singapore. "Freemasonry helps to keep people sane," he said, distributing more leaflets.

On the way out I hurried past the smoking room where several snoozing Freemasons, mysterious, gloomy, exhaust-encrusted, were sunk into brown leather sofas, and

past closed doors behind which, for all I know, there might have been sacrificial altars, chickens with their heads chopped off, or even some cabalistic ceremony in

full swing . . . The Freemasons' Hall is certainly not a place for women, or cynics, or for those of a nervous disposition ○

—VAL HENNESSY



J. L. Carr, author of *A Month in the Country*, at home in Kettering

WRITERS

Tales from the back bedroom

J. L. CARR loves telling stories, and he tells them with Ancient Mariner skill, complete with appropriate changes in volume and pregnant pauses. Like the former headmaster he is, he expects you to be quiet while he tells them, and they sometimes

take a good five minutes. But he is also sensitive to the interest level of his listeners, and if you cough or look away for a moment, he hastens over the part of the story he is on. He is a novelist through and through.

My favourite of all his novels is

A Month in the Country. Set in the hot, green, Yorkshire summer of 1920, it is the story of what happens when a young war-damaged Londoner comes to a remote North Riding village to uncover a medieval wall-painting. Its mood is both elegiac and cheering, wonderfully satisfying, and most people who start reading it find they cannot put it down until they have finished. It has just been made into a film starring Colin Firth, Kenneth Branagh and Natasha Richardson, retaining not only its original title but also, more remarkably, its quality of unsentimental lyrical nostalgia. "Not much happens in that novel," says J. L. Carr, "So all the more credit to them for choosing to film it in these blood-boltered days."

Born 70 years ago and brought up in North Riding villages, J. L. Carr retains a belief in the Last Dreadful Day of Judgment instilled by his Methodist preacher father. He taught for 30 years (including a year in South Dakota early on), 15 of them as a headmaster, and was stationed in West Africa during the war.

"I didn't start writing until I was 50," he says, "so I had a lot of material to draw on." His novels are all extremely different from each other. *The Harpole Report*, the funniest school novel in the language, gained the signal distinction of being chosen by Frank Muir to take along with his Desert Island Discs. Others include *How Steeple Sinderby Wanderers Won the F.A. Cup*, which speaks for itself but manages to appeal to non-football fans too; *A Day in Summer*, a contrapuntal tale of lust and revenge in which the action is contained within 24 hours; and *The Battle of Pollocks Crossing*, where a young Yorkshire teacher goes to work in South Dakota in 1929. His own favourite is *A Season in Sinji*, a cricket novel set in West Africa during the Second World War.

After 30 years of teaching, J. L. Carr decided to leave security behind him and launch into the risky business of publishing. He did this from his back bedroom in Kettering, on £1,600 savings, using shoe boxes as filing cabinets. He produced little books bound in card, 5 by 3½ inches in size, of 16

pages each; the legend on their inside covers runs that "They fit a common envelope, go for minimum postage, are comfortable bedside books (only one hand need suffer exposure) and can be palmed from the cuff during tedious speeches and over-long sermons." So successful did they prove that he has sold more than half a million of them—and all from his back bedroom.

The original impulse was to provide inexpensive facsimile first editions of our finest poets for people who normally would not read poetry (even now the books are only 40p each). The range soon broadened to include prose works like the best-selling *History of England by a Partial, Prejudiced & Ignorant Historian* by Jane Austen, collections of woodcuts, and miniature dictionaries like the ever-popular Carr's *Dictionary of Extra-ordinary English Cricketers*. He has marked the 21st anniversary of his publishing business by giving it a name at last—The Quince Tree Press (a quince tree grows outside his front door).

Now J. L. Carr has decided to publish his latest novel himself. *What Hetty Did* chronicles the picaresque adventures of an 18-year-old sixth-form girl who runs away from home. "I find novel-writing such a chore that I can face it only by trying something different each time," he explains. "And with Hetty, I set myself this challenge: can an old man write a first-person story told by a teenage girl? I was offered £5,000 by a publisher for it but didn't feel they were really keen on it. So I thought I'd risk tackling this (perhaps my final novel) myself, purely for the fun of publishing a proper full-length book. I can choose my own paper, jacket picture, include end-pieces and even an index. I will also, of course, have the hair-raising job of selling it; but I'm even looking forward to losing money on it. I am prepared to pay for my pleasure, you see." ○

—HELEN SIMPSON

Two hundred bookshops sell J. L. Carr's Quince Tree books, including the National Portrait Gallery and Mowbrays in London. Order forms from J. L. Carr, 27 Mill Dale Road, Kettering, Northamptonshire.

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Professor Carmen Martín Rubios, who discovered the document

HISTORY

Truths about the Incas

Our understanding of the great civilization could change because of a revealing ancient manuscript found in Mallorca

THEY WERE wizards of astronomy and agriculture but failed to invent the wheel. They ruled 18 million subjects in a territory larger than Europe without the benefit of a written language. They had vast armies but surrendered to a ragged band of Spanish conquistadors. The history of the Inca civilization of the Andes comprises many such mysteries.

They are now being unravelled with the aid of a Spanish manuscript lost for 300 years. It was written by one Juan de Betanzos, a scribe liberated from his job as a dockyard tally clerk to accompany Francisco Pizarro in his conquests of South America.

Betanzos was more than a foreign observer. He learned the Inca language, Quechua, married a local princess—one of Pizarro's cast-off concubines—and set up home in Cuzco, the mountain-top seat of the Inca empire. His unique eyewitness insights have come to light in the book collection of the

Duke of Medina Sidona, bought this year by the wealthy March family of Mallorca.

The motives of Betanzos were not without self-interest. Following the assassination of Pizarro, Betanzos backed the wrong horse, siding with Pizarro's younger brother, Gonzalo, in a revolt against King Charles V of Spain. To secure his credentials with the king's re-established regime, he agreed to compile a "for your eyes only" intelligence report for the royal envoy, Cristobal Vaca de Castro. The year was 1542.

The monarch's new envoys were instructed to respect the Incas and the visible signs of their civilization's grandeur: the paved roads, the great buildings, the terraced farmlands. More pragmatically, Vaca de Castro believed that only by using the old Inca system could the few hundred Spaniards in Peru govern their millions of Indian subjects.

Vaca de Castro wanted Betanzos to tell him everything, from how the Inca rulers had dazzled their subjects into believing in their divine Sun God origins, to how their taxes were collected and how many leagues in a day their messengers could run.

Betanzos was up to the task. Intrigued by the Incas' ignorance

of the written word, he had discovered that they had evolved a caste of professional memorizers, known as *quipucamayos*. By using a mnemonic device of knotted strands of coloured string, these oral historians had amazing recall of past battles, harvests down to the bushel, and of royal decrees. Betanzos had cultivated them.

He combined the stories of the *quipucamayos* (though even they, he found, had been kept in the dark about the Inca rulers' solar beginnings) with his own balanced observations. His report bore the ungainly title of *A Sum and Narration of the Incas*, and it may have been too even-handed for the Spanish monarch's liking. Only fragments of his manuscript remain in Philip II's library in El Escorial, outside Madrid.

What scholars did not know was that Betanzos had made a copy of his work. It was this that survived in the Duke of Medina Sidona's archives, yet its significance was appreciated only when Professor Carmen Martín Rubios, a scholar on Peru, noticed a reference to it in a newspaper while on holiday in Mallorca. With a few spare hours before flying back to Madrid, she went to look at it. "I wasn't expecting to find much, really. I thought it was just a copy of the fragment in El Escorial," she says. "But when I saw it was the complete version, I cried with emotion."

Betanzos's chronicle radically alters the image of the Incas as warriors with a taste for human sacrifice. While the Aztec priests of Mexico cut out the hearts of their victims on top of their temples, the Incas had no such practices. They were warlike, but their system of government was probably more humane than that of any European nation. The picture that emerges from Betanzos is that of a "paternal socialism", as Professor Martín describes it. There was no money. No one owned property. Peasants farmed both the lands of their collective and those of their ruler (known as the Inca). The Inca's crop was then distributed around the empire, feeding the army, the old and infirm, widows and orphans.

Off the battlefield, human life was highly regarded. In the Inca capital there were midnight drop-off points where mothers could entrust unwanted newborn babies to the state orphanages. This service, according to Betanzos, was much used by the beautiful priestesses of the Sun God, who

were supposed to remain virgins.

Among the working classes, love did not exist. Once a year the Inca married off thousands in a big ceremony with much chewing of coca leaves—from which cocaine derives—and swilling of corn beer. The Incas also provided state-run brothels for bachelors and passing armies.

Betanzos also provides possible reasons for the Incas' failure to invent the wheel. Geography was against them. Their empire was strung along the jagged spine of the Andes. Rivers roared through steep gorges, over which builders had spun rope suspension bridges. Mountains were so steep that they could be crossed only by using stone steps. The Incas also lacked horses or oxen and, as the Spaniards swiftly found, llamas became enraged when harnessed to a cart.

Practical talents were nurtured and admired. Betanzos describes how children with any scientific aptitudes were placed in special schools. Architects and engineers enjoyed the social status of war heroes, designing and building cities in the shape of sacred animals or ceremonial daggers. Cuzco was a puma, with the fortress of Sacsahuaman as the feline's head. In agriculture the Incas adapted brilliantly to their soaring peaks by creating microclimates with step-terraces. They carefully calibrated temperature and the duration of the sun's rays so that on different levels of the same mountain their farmers could grow fruit, cotton, sugar and potatoes.

One mystery that Betanzos does not answer is why the Incas believed in the "white bearded gods", the Viracochas, who, according to legend, would come on judgment day to bring peace. It is an important question, for it was this potent myth that protected Pizarro's Spanish invasion and accounts for the surrender to him of the Inca emperor, Atahualpa.

Betanzos records that although Atahualpa was warned by his spies of the excesses of the Spaniards, he insisted on meeting Pizarro, fortifying himself for this assignation with his "god" by consuming quantities of corn beer. Pizarro's godlike aura did not last long. Atahualpa found himself seized and imprisoned while the conquistadors looted his gold and raped his lands. In short, he lost an empire while drunk ○

—TIM MCGIRK

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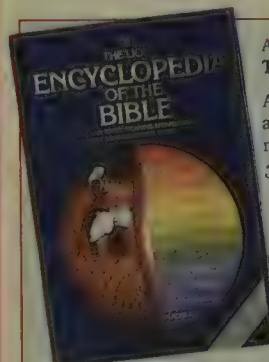
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P R E S S F O R A C T I O N





Service with a smile: head chef Steven Doherty, left, and manager Silvano Giraldo at Le Gavroche, winner of this year's ILN award

RESTAURANT OF THE YEAR

The *ILN*'s judges had no difficulty in deciding which London restaurant deserved the magazine's award. Report by Henry Porter. Photograph by Stuart Nicol

IN THE discreet surroundings of the United Oxford and Cambridge Club, the judges assembled to determine the winner of *The Illustrated London News* Restaurant of the Year award. They looked a tolerant and easy-going group of people, but within these gentlemen there was a steely desire for quality and a ruthless eye for the culinary *faux pas*.

There was Sir Clement Freud, who recently lost his seat in the House of Commons but gained a knighthood; Jancis Robinson, the wine writer, who came in a wide-brimmed bowler hat which would have looked eccentric on anyone else; Drew Smith, the editor of *The Good Food Guide*, who regards himself as something of an undercover agent and refuses to have his photograph taken; and finally the food writer Frances Bissell. There was to be a fifth judge to serve under the chairmanship of the *ILN*'s editor-in-chief, James Bishop, but the chef Michael Quinn failed to appear.

From the moment they entered the Oxford and Cambridge they took on the demeanour

most frequently seen in the men that carry out the Ministry of Transport's driving tests: grave, world-weary and humourless. They drank mineral water and avoided small talk.

The list of restaurants most frequently recommended by the *ILN* readers looked long and difficult and certainly the criteria embraced every possible aspect of the restaurants. Aside from the quality of food and wine the judges had to assess the service, ambience, value for money and the overall experience. The shortlist provided by the readers was: The Dorchester, Le Caprice, The Connaught, L'Escargot, Le Gavroche, Alastair Little, Odins, Simply Nico and La Tante Claire.

The judges added three other restaurants to the list, The Gay Hussar, Rue St Jacques and Le Soufflé. All were recognized as being in the top class of London restaurants, and were judged on that basis.

It is a cliché of these occasions that the judges suffer agonies of indecision, take much longer than their allotted time to make their choice

and wallow in remorse over their exclusions. This was most certainly not true of the *ILN* judges who sat down to lunch and set about the list with an unfriendly glee. Sir Clement started by nominating The Connaught as the first he would like to see removed from the deliberations. His reasons were idiosyncratic. "The last time I went they had a ghastly wine waiter who had no idea what he was doing. I asked the head waiter what on earth The Connaught was doing and he told me the man was under notice." Sir Clement then gargled some Perrier to show how disgusting the wine waiter had been. He had another complaint. The vases of flowers on each table were swarming in flies which necessitated the waiters having to swat them on the table.

Drew Smith chimed in with the view that The Connaught's food was best at 6pm when the Americans dined before going to the theatre. Thereafter its standards declined. Other judges agreed there were too many variables for the restaurant to be given the ultimate accolade.

Thus in a few short sentences the Connaught, one of the temples of great cooking, was dismissed. Le Caprice and L'Escargot followed. Jancis Robinson felt that she could not honestly take part in a discussion about the latter since her husband Nick owns and runs it, but in any case the other judges felt that, assessed against the very highest quality in London, neither of these quite made it to the top. Both were popular, trendy and great for star-gazing, but limited in some other aspects of the judges' criteria.

The Dorchester received everyone's approval but the panel felt that it would not be until next year that the kitchens of Anton Mosimann would fully recover from the disturbance caused by recent renovation.

The Gay Hussar, perhaps one of the best small restaurants in London, is renowned as much for its proprietor, Victor Sassie, as for its food. Sir Clement Freud said that he had some intelligence that Mr Sassie might sell the restaurant and thus he could not recommend it. Other judges recognized its qualities but marked it down because it sometimes had the atmosphere of a club in which strangers could feel ill at ease. Rue St Jacques, Odins and Le Soufflé all given good marks for the quality of their food and ambience, but in each one the judges found some tiny fault. Le Soufflé was cited, however, as the best of these. So in a very short time we had arrived with just four restaurants on the list, Le Gavroche, Alastair Little, Simply Nico and La Tante Claire.

Alastair Little is a new restaurant in Frith Street, Soho. It has rapidly acquired an extra-

ordinary reputation among gourmets. Jancis Robinson said the reputation was deserved but she felt Mr Little's establishment should be eliminated from the proceedings because of its exceptionally hard seats. Sir Clement, who by now had proved himself to be the most opinionated of the judges, remembered that in any case only yesterday that Mr Little was the third pastry-cook, or some such, in unpromising surroundings in the west of London.

Another point was that it was extremely hard to book a table at Alastair Little, but the main concern was that, exciting though it undoubtedly was, its slight air of frenzy, its newness and its eclectic nature would have made it a risky choice. He was scored from the list and we proceeded to Simply Nico in Rochester Row, which was set up by Nico Ladenis after his failure to attract the gourmandizing public to a restaurant near Reading. Nico produced strong emotions in the judges, not because of the quality of his culinary inventions, which were universally praised, but because of his overbearing character. Nico, it seems, simply cannot resist appearing at the diner's side during the meal to discuss his own great talent.

He is said to alternate between obsequiousness and dismissiveness according to whom he is addressing, the opposite, in fact, of Mr Koffman at La Tante Claire. While Nico bamboozles his guests, Mr Koffman is retiring and gracious. He is also a genuinely great cook who in Drew Smith's view should be applauded for his remarkable creativity. Someone mentioned that Mr Koffman had invented 30 or so dishes involving the scallop. Jancis Robinson

produced his wine list and said it was among the best in London.

La Tante Claire is clearly a favourite of Clement Freud's. He became quite lyrical about a boned pig's trotter that he had once consumed there. "I mean, imagine the skill in boning a pig's trotter—you wouldn't think there would be anything left to eat."

At this stage it looked as if Mr Koffman was going to win, but we had yet to discuss Le Gavroche. Miss Robinson began by flourishing Le Gavroche's wine list. "It is very good," she said, "but there is nothing of any quality under £10 and 98 per cent of the wines are French." Drew Smith sprung from his normal languor to commend Le Gavroche's extraordinary service. He said that if a diner finds his or her dish not to be quite right, the offending plate is removed with the minimum of fuss.

The one reservation shown by the judges was the high cost of a meal for two at Le Gavroche (anything between £100 and £150, though substantially cheaper at lunchtime, as Frances Bissell pointed out. She had recently enjoyed lunch for two for £50). Next year the *ILN* will offer a special prize for restaurants that provide quality for under £50 a couple.

The judging had been swift and, in some instances, ruthless. There was very little procrastination and when James Bishop asked which of the restaurants the judges would choose to go to for a special occasion, there was a unanimous vote for Le Gavroche. It was, without doubt, the best restaurant in London during 1987. Our congratulations to Monsieur Le Roux and his staff. □



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Blissful fare at Frith's

Kingsley Amis finds satisfaction in Soho

I APPROACHED Frith's with some misgivings. There are horrible surprises to be met with in Soho nowadays, my most recent one just across the way, where what I had known as a decent quiet fish restaurant had been transformed behind my back into a strip-lighted hell shaking with rock music. After putting my head into it I pulled it out again fast and waited for my tardy guest in the street, being rained on a certain amount.

Clearly, no such trouble was going to come up at Frith's. Indeed the look of the place reminded me of an old-fashioned teashop in a West of England cathedral town: small, conservatively decorated and furnished, no eye-catchers anywhere, tables a proper distance apart. And it was blessedly quiet, once an amenity you took for granted, now almost the most precious of all. So far so good, I thought, but only so far. It was not going to be possible to offset any shortcomings in the fare by admiring, as you sometimes can, the vulgarity of the décor.

At this point I might as well relinquish any attempt at drama and admit that there were no shortcomings in the fare that needed offsetting—well, my breast of woodpigeon wanted a little more chewing than I thought was entirely proper, though it was full of flavour and the sauce (cider and grapes) was fine. My two companions and I were bowled over by everything else. The menu is purposely limited and in our two sessions we got through most of the dishes between the three of us. Unusually, the meals showed no dip in quality when the main courses came and, more unusually still, the dinner was fully as good as the lunch. Portions were nicely judged, neither short-changing the greedy nor causing the heart of the more boozily inclined to quail by confronting him with, say, a barracuda-sized sole.

Having said as much, I could almost afford to give a list of what we ate and then pipe down, but I realize rather more is required of me than that. So: perhaps the outstanding starter, against stiff competition, consisted of sautéed chicken livers in a savoury sauce, and for all I know it may be easy to cook such livers as impeccably as these had been, but so delicious and well-balanced a sauce surely calls for exceptional care and skill. The sauces at this restaurant turned out to be one of its great glories, and care as well as skill had gone into every detail. Every ingredient was deliberately selected, nothing left to chance, meaning, for

instance, that the olive oil in the salad dressing was not just all right but the best. It featured to advantage in other starters, the green bean salad with baked walnuts and chilled olives, and (to me highly suspect on paper, but marvellous on the plate) baked goat's cheese with garden salad and garlic croutons. Of the iced melon and ginger soup I will say only that it's a

of spinach and oyster mushrooms... If I treat these at the length they deserve I shall have no space for anything else.

The finishers likewise contained no easy options. Experience shows that any fool can, and often does, stuff the customer with sugar and cream and hope to blot out the memory of earlier defects. Not necessary here, and against gastronomic policy. Accordingly the gooseberry fool was allowed to keep its gooseberriness, its acidity, to such effect that she who had eaten it at lunch refused to switch at dinner. "Out of this world" was the least enthusiastic tribute I heard to the coconut parfait with chocolate covering. And the wide selection of cheeses had a splendidly fierce one from Kent, called (I think) St George, that was new to me.

If I seldom go on at such length about the food in any given restaurant, this may be because it seldom seems worthwhile to do so. Anyway, my words about the drinks at Frith's must be few. I thought the pre-prandial state of affairs markedly discouraging, with no bar and not even a space set aside for that purpose, and no malt whisky except the ubiquitous and unappealing Glenfiddich. A Dry Martini would have been about as sensible a thing to ask for here as a cheeseburger. My Jack Daniel's on the rocks came in a narrow tumbler with ice piled up above the surface of the drink, the only amateurish touch in the whole performance. But the wine-list, and indeed the wines, restored confidence in full.

Like the menu, the list is short and carefully put together. Prices are moderate, up to £15 or so except for the champagnes (which include a nice pink one). For me, the star of the show was Cabernet

Sauvignon 1985 from Waimauku in New Zealand, good fruity stuff without the heaviness of some antipodean reds. It was brought and left on the table—no basket rubbish—and nobody seemed to mind if we did some pouring ourselves. Excellent condition. Right temperature. Sensible glasses.

The service was not only efficient but of that special friendliness only possible in a small place where everyone wants you to be pleased. I was told the menu changes every month... ○

Frith's, 14 Frith Street, W1 (439 3370). Mon-Fri 12.30-3pm, 6.30-11.30pm; Sat 6.30-11-30pm. About £35 for two



good job it's not alcoholic. Duck noodle soup with parmesan dumplings: first-rate, dumplings light as feathers.

The monotonous litany of praise continues for the main courses. The fillet of beef with a green sauce was beautifully cooked, just well enough done, really warm and staying warm. I had a peppered halibut on a veal and mushroom sauce that educated me about halibut and, inevitably, had exactly the right amount of pepper. The Aylesbury duckling cooked two ways, braised and sort of Chinesey as it proved, won the approval of a diehard partisan of duck roasted in the antique English style. The salmi (ragout or casserole, says my dictionary) of rabbit with cream and tarragon... The timbale



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The Fishermen's Dinner

Matthew Fort has fresh ideas for feeding old trout

I CANNOT remember now which came first, the fisherman or the burgundies.

Some years ago I was temporarily in funds and I bought some magnums of burgundies from Berry Bros & Rudd which had been enthusiastically endorsed by Auberon Waugh. I don't know how much Mr Waugh really knows about wine, but he certainly has the common touch when it comes to recommending them.

At about the same time we began to have an annual Fishermen's Dinner for reasons I shan't bore you with, but at which all conversation about fishing was, of course, banned, and for which the magnums of burgundy provided a central pillar around which to plan a menu.

I am a subscriber to the modern French view, and the much older Chinese one, that a meal can consist of any number of courses, none of which is more important than the last—the meal as a rectangle, as it were. The Anglo-Saxon tradition is triangular: starter, main course, pud. Triangles, I feel, are less flexible than rectangles, and certainly give less scope for indulgence.

Consequently I planned quite a modest five-course dinner. We had elected for austerity measures after last year's effort left certain members of our party, well, shall I say, gasping. Even a five-course dinner, however, is not quite as simple as it sounds. There's got to be some kind of contrast and balance between the wines as well as the food. You don't want your guests monstrously drunk or bursting at the seams when they stagger up from the table.

Obviously the burgundy, Vosne-Romanée 1976, London-bottled by Berry Bros, provided a starting point (but not the focal point). It certainly simplified matters. You know where you are with a full-bodied burgundy. There's no point in being too clever or too fancy. There's not the room for the kind of finesse you may try with a claret, for example. You must look for a marriage of flavours.

So I betrothed my burgundies to grouse. Wonderful birds, grouse, and particularly abundant this year, apparently. And at £5 a bird from Curnick's in the Fulham Road they seemed, if not quite a snip, then a sizeable cut in last year's ransom. They were fine, succulent birds, hung to perfection, and quite worthy of the madeira-flavoured sauce that I concocted from their carcasses to go with them.

I should like to say that the grouse set a seasonal note for the rest of the menu, but I'm not quite sure that's true. It rather depends if you think of courgette flowers as emblematic of "the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness" or of high summer in some Tuscan town. Stuffed with finely diced scallops, courgettes and parmesan cheese, and stewed in butter, they lent an opulent note to an otherwise austere fish course of steamed fillets of John Dory with a sauce made from fish bones and white



hangover, we decided to stretch the wines to cover more than one course. So, in fact, the wonderful light, spicy Gewürztraminer had originally been chosen to go arm in arm with the preceding course, which was a warm salad of foie gras.

Where do you find fresh foie gras in London? Easy: the Boucherie Lamartine in Ebury Street (and also, I believe, in Harrods). It comes vacuum-packed and costs quite a lot. It's not something I should recommend for a school picnic or to accompany the bacon and bubble and squeak, but as an occasional treat, a rare indulgence, it has a lot going for it. For one thing, you don't need a lot of it. I defy anyone to eat more than a couple of slices of foie gras without beginning to feel like the goose from which it came. One liver was just enough for 10 people, and worked out at £1.70 a head.

I seared each slice very quickly on both sides, placed them on a bed of sliced and fried Jerusalem artichokes, anointed them with a little balsamic vinegar, and sent them on their way. The cries of delight and murmuring noises that followed were very gratifying. I hope by now you are beginning to get the flavour of the occasion. Restraint on every side.

The seasonal theme was certainly picked up in the first and last courses. What do you do with those beetroot you forgot to eat when they were sweet little morsels about the size of a plum? You turn them into borsch. Opulent in flavour, rich in colour, given the necessary balance by a touch of vinegar and a fat comma of sour cream, borsch made with duck stock is hard to beat as an autumn soup.

At the far end of dinner from it, as we sat stupefied by the burgundy and grouse, came small tarts of fresh blackberries, just macerated with sugar, and greengages very lightly stewed in *eau-de-vie*. You may feel these were a little unsubstantial compared with what had gone before. Maybe, but at that stage we wanted less substance and more refreshment.

There you have it, the Fisherman's Dinner for 1987. In case you lost track it went like this:

Borsch

Warm foie gras with Jerusalem artichokes
Wine: Gewürztraminer Kaefferkopf 1984
(Sick-Dreyer)

Fillets of John Dory with courgette flowers
stuffed with scallops, courgettes and
parmesan cheese

Roast grouse in a madeira sauce with runner
beans

Wine: Vosne-Romanée 1976

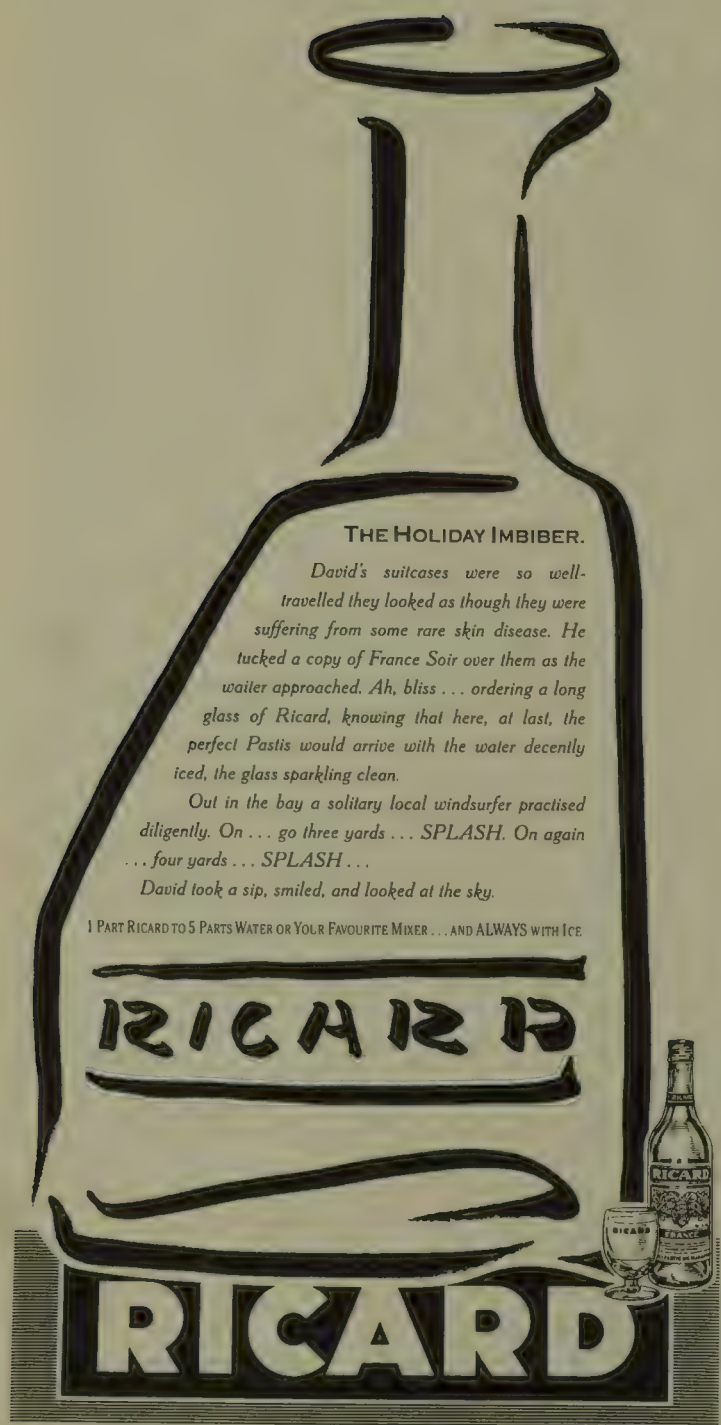
Tarts of blackberries and greengages

Oh yes—we kicked off with some admirable
champagne from Alfred Gratien, vintage 1979.
Personally, I'm all in favour of austerity ○

Matthew Fort is co-author of the Peter Fort
column for the Financial Times

wine. They tasted rather good, too, and went surprisingly well with the Gewürztraminer Kaefferkopf 1984 from the memorably named Alsatian firm of Sick-Dreyer, and available from L'Alsacien at 105 Old Brompton Road.

As a general rule, Gewürztraminer would not be my first choice of wine to have with fish. Its inclusion with the John Dory was, in fact, the result of this year's austerity measures. Rather than have a different wine with every course, and encourage various grades of



THE HOLIDAY IMBIBER.

David's suitcases were so well-travelled they looked as though they were suffering from some rare skin disease. He tucked a copy of *France Soir* over them as the waiter approached. Ah, bliss... ordering a long glass of Ricard, knowing that here, at last, the perfect Pastis would arrive with the water decently iced, the glass sparkling clean.

Out in the bay a solitary local windsurfer practised diligently. On... go three yards... **SPLASH**. On again... four yards... **SPLASH**...

David took a sip, smiled, and looked at the sky.

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The listing bank

Lindsay Vincent on the midlife crisis at the Midland Bank

POULTRY is one of those addresses in the City of London that evokes vivid images of days long gone. It adjoins Cheapside, itself a conduit to Wood Street, Milk Street, Bread Street and the other historic lanes and arteries that make up the mercantile heart of the capital.

Poultry is also the headquarters of the Midland Bank, whose opulent Lutyens building is a vivid reminder of Britain's former standing in the industrial era. Yet, among the City's banking parlours, the ornate emporium has also become something of a museum piece.

One day this autumn, Midland's headquarters played host to a distinguished guest from the other side of the commercial tracks—Mayfair. It was Maurice Saatchi, he of the advertising brothers whose view of the way that service industries should be moulded to the benefit of mankind in general, and Saatchi & Saatchi shareholders in particular, amounts to either megalomania or visionary genius.

Saatchi had sought, and was given, an audience with Sir Kit McMahon, Midland's recently-appointed chairman. What Saatchi had proposed was nothing short of audacious—a takeover of the Midland Bank by his advertising and PR-based company. Was such an improbable union ever possible? Sir Kit professes: "For me it was never on, but I did not want to prejudge it and I was interested to hear from Maurice Saatchi his arguments as to how a service company with no capital should own a clearing bank which requires huge capital. Nothing he said convinced me."

Sir Kit doubtless slipped around the corner from Poultry and informed Robin Leigh-Pemberton, Governor of the Bank of England, of this breathtaking proposal. The Saatchi brothers darted elsewhere to see whether they could buy Hill Samuel, the £800 million merchant bank coveted by TSB. Again they were shown the door.

It was hardly a secret that Midland had fallen on hard times. But to such an extent that the bank was vulnerable to a takeover? And from a company that has existed for barely two decades? The Saatchi brothers may have an inflated view of their abilities, but what they demonstrated was something that until this autumn



McMahon: his success was the cue for the share-dealers to start playing

had been unthinkable: a takeover bid for one of the pillars of the nation's banking by a company with no direct banking experience.

The Saatchi brothers would have been greatly influenced by the earlier news that Lord Hanson had bought 6 per cent of Midland for Hanson Trust, the mighty Anglo-American conglomerate whose methods would in the past have been condemned as asset-stripping. And other high rollers, including the hyper-active publisher Robert Maxwell, are said to have bought a significant block of shares.

Lord Hanson is a former director of Lloyds, retiring earlier this year. He is not widely regarded as a potential suitor for Midland. He has assured the Midland board of this—and

presumably the Bank of England. Lord Hanson is perceived to be buying cheap in the hope of selling dear; Maxwell is perceived as travelling in the predatory peer's slipstream.

As speculation gathers, Sir Kit McMahon is adamant about one thing: "Despite the rumours, it is simply not on the cards that the Midland Bank is going to be taken over by a hostile or unwelcome owner." As a former deputy governor of the Bank of England, Sir Kit knows the score when it comes to custodians of the nation's money. The function is too profitable, powerful and privileged to be open to all; outsiders are welcome only if the Old Lady welcomes them. But nothing is for ever. Could the order be displaying the first cracks?

As one senior Midland executive puts it: "I have given up saying that certain things in the City are impossible. We have every assurance that Hanson is not a prospective owner. But the unanswered question is whether Lord Hanson, to use the horrid parlance of these times, has 'put us into play' because of his actions."

Yet it is because of the actions of Midland itself that the bank is now looking anxiously over its shoulder. Thirty years ago Midland was the largest bank in the world. Now the bank hardly ranks in world ratings; and to further aggravate matters, it finds itself the plaything of a whimsical stock market.

Midland has been guilty of letting its costs get out of control; over-expansion; bad lending; short-sighted management; and much more. True, it has been operating in a banking climate that is as hostile as anything since the 30s. Each of the big four have been hurt, but none to the extent of Midland, which some banking experts thought to be a terminal case ahead of remedial action earlier this year.

Midland has traditionally been the main banker to the big names in the British manufacturing industry. Where there was once a thriving West Midlands, there now rests a location which carries the same status for EEC aid as Sicily. Against this background, and with the aim of emulating the competition—notably Barclays and National Westminster—Midland decided, eight years ago, to step up its expansion abroad.

Caution was the order of the day, since on its home patch Mid-

Suitor Saatchi, left; and high-rollers Hanson, centre, and Maxwell





"Sitting on a small fortune was decidedly uncomfortable."

"I suppose it was about the closest I'd ever come to a mid-life crisis.

I'd been up to my proverbial neck. My usual 12-hour working day had stretched to a norm of 15 hours. And weekends, which I once held sacrosanct, were being eaten away by paperwork.

Coincidentally John, my eldest, was safely ensconced in university and Jenny was off on some field trip to do with her Biology 'A' level.

So I thought, to heck with it all.

I asked my secretary to cancel all my appointments and book me a short holiday. I gave her 3 criteria: I wanted sunshine; a reasonable hotel; and she was to reveal its location to no one.

Within days my wife and I were in Miami.

While she took in the local sights, I did a lot of thinking.

On paper, I suppose, a lot of people would have envied me.

My company was growing. I had a nice house. Nice kids. Nice cars. And a nice little nest-egg of various shares that was fast approaching six figures.

What I didn't have was time to enjoy these things.

There and then, I resolved never again to work more than a 12-hour day, and restore my weekends to their sacred status. If something wasn't done it would just have to wait.

I felt better already.

Then, I don't know why, I recalled a conversation with my bank manager some months previously. (Religiously, twice a

year, I take him to an outrageously expensive restaurant and insist on picking up the bill.)

Anyway, he knew about my portfolio and insisted on telling me about a service Lloyds Bank had dreamed up for its customers, and indeed anyone else, that would make their life much easier.

It was called Asset Management, or some such name.

Frankly, I hadn't really listened because I hadn't been that interested.

But on that holiday, the more I remembered the more appealing it became.

To cut a long story short, I signed on the dotted line within days of my return to England. The first thing Lloyds Bank did was assign me a 'Personal Account Executive', one Philip Hunter.

At our initial meeting I made it clear that I wanted him to take over the whole caboodle; handle all the paper work and make the buying and selling decisions.

We also agreed a broad strategy. He was to go for capital growth rather than income. He was occasionally to chance his arm on a few speculative stocks. And, backing a hunch of mine, I wanted him to take a particular interest in small electronics companies.

Once we'd got that straight he opened an interest-bearing account to act as a pool for purchases and sale proceeds.

He even built in a 'cash sweep' facility on my current account, so anything over £1,000 was automatically swept into my investment account. Then he got to work.

That was about a year ago now.

And since then I'm delighted to say that I've done practically nothing.

I no longer spend hours poring over the City pages deciding what to buy or sell.

I no longer have weighty company reports thudding onto my doormat.

I no longer have to faff about with scissors, pins and cheques when I go for a new issue.

I no longer spend hours with a calculator working out my worth, since they send me regular statements.

And, joy of joys, I no longer need to rummage through sheafs of old contract notes in April, because they prepare a special statement for the taxman.

I also ought to add that the service has a few frills which, while not vital, are most welcome. For instance, they automatically upped my Access Card limit to £5,000. And I can now draw up to £500 a day on my Cashpoint card.

But good as their Asset Management Service undoubtedly is, Lloyds Bank isn't a charity. All told, they charge me around £250 a quarter, which although well worth it, isn't peanuts.

In fact, d'you know what I'm going to do next time I take my bank manager to lunch?

I'm going to invite Philip Hunter along too. And when the bill arrives, I'm not going to put my hand in my pocket."



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YOUR MAN IN LISBON

land had paid heavily for buying two merchant banking businesses—Montagu Trust and Drayton Corporation—just before the secondary banking crash. But there was nothing especially clever about the chosen foreign home, California. The state was experiencing one of its periodic booms and, although “buy in gloom, sell in boom” has long been an investment maxim, it is one that was lost on Midland executives.

After one or two rejections, Midland decided to buy control of Crocker Bank in 1981. Two years after, the West Coast economic bubble burst and Crocker reeled under the impact of bad debts. By 1984 Crocker was forced to write off nearly \$350 million and Midland had to slash its dividend payment as a result. Management was sorted out at Crocker with the appearance of “firemen” from head office and it was partially successful. By 1986 Midland had bought the whole of Crocker and, in a seemingly adroit deal, sold the bank to Wells Fargo for just over \$1 billion, a price which recouped most of Midland’s total outlay.

But Wells Fargo struck a hard bargain. Midland had to take over \$3.1 billion of Crocker’s shaky international loans—half of which were in Latin America.

Heads rolled and the man given the task of sorting out the Crocker débâcle was Sir Donald Barron, a diminutive and demonstrably decent man who stuck doggedly to the recovery course

he had mapped out for Midland. But in a sense, Midland needed a career banker and full-time chairman and in 1986 it recruited the Old Lady’s own deputy governor, the Australian-born banker Sir Kit McMahon. “The appointment brought a breath of fresh air in terms of intellect,” recalls one of Midland’s senior officers.

Sir Kit brought more than fresh air. Last July he released a gale of stale air when he decided to write-off money that was finally deemed beyond recall. The write-offs to Third World countries totalled over £900 million and to meet the cost, Sir Kit called on shareholders to put up £700 million for new shares; and the Clydesdale Bank, the third largest in Scotland, and the Northern Bank in Ulster were sold to the National Bank of Australia. In all, the new funds sought were in excess of £1 billion.

Sir Kit was bold and resolute. But signs that the worst was over were the cue for the share dealers—notably Lord Hanson—to start playing. “Internally, we always thought that we could appear vulnerable once we had cleared the desks,” says the Midland officer. A leading analyst notes: “There is still much more to do; the bank’s cost structure is way out of line with the competition and not enough has been invested in new technology. Once house-keeping exercises such as these are completed, Midland could become the best buy in the sector.”

The main problem facing the Midland Bank

is where does it go next? The international aspirations are behind it, albeit not for ever, and it is probably the most innovative of the UK banks in the personal sector. One thing is certain—Midland’s aim to become one of the global banks has failed. “Midland will not, as it stands, be able to be part of that,” says Sir Kit. “Some people say we have got to go right back to our roots and simply be a domestic British bank. I think that is naïve. If we did that, we would, as it were, meet the TSB on the way up, going in the opposite direction.”

Midland’s preferred course, according to insiders, is to forge connexion with other small international institutions before laying out its bold strategy for the next century.

But the question remains as to whether Midland is living on borrowed time as an independent bank. Only this spring a banking trade journal asked Robin Leigh-Pemberton how he felt about non-financial institutions buying banks. He replied that it was “not categorically impossible”, but in a keynote speech last month the Governor appeared to have shifted his ground. He said he would need “some persuading” before allowing an industrial or commercial company to take control of a bank, particularly a clearer, because of conflicts of interest, and the danger of contagion if the parent got into trouble. The establishment is rallying around itself ○

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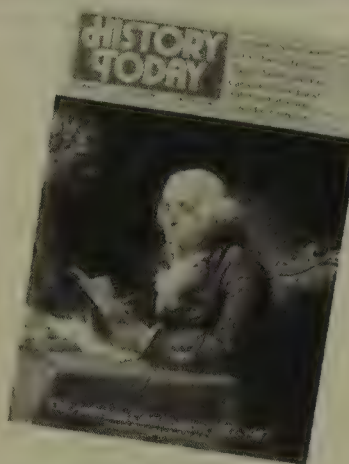
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Murdoch's paperchase

Louis Heren charts a new raid on Britain's newspaper industry

I HAVE met many more men, and women for that matter, more unlikeable than Rupert Murdoch, but very few who have generated as much hostility—and fear. This was dramatically evident when in a dawn raid he increased his stake in Pearson, the publishers of the *Financial Times*, to 14.9 per cent. Horror swept like a seismic wave through the City of London, Westminster and what was once Fleet Street.

It was headline news in most national newspapers. Bryan Gould, Labour's trade and industry spokesman, demanded government assurances that there could be no question of Murdoch acquiring more newspapers. Stockbrokers and City analysts feared that another fine old British institution was vulnerable to alien predators.

The fuss was understandable. Murdoch is the world's greatest media tycoon, and already owns about one third of Britain's national press: *The Times*, *The Sunday Times*, *The Sun*, *Today* and the *News of the World*. He makes the old press barons—Northcliffe, Beaverbrook and Rothermere—seem frail pygmies. The fact that he was on the prowl again seemed to prove that his appetite for newspaper titles is insatiable. When and where would he stop?

It is unlikely that Murdoch ever will, at least voluntarily. His appetite for television and cable systems, book publishing and films—he controls 20th Century Fox—is equally insatiable; and this makes him potentially dangerous. Democratic government depends upon free speech in all its manifestations. They should not be controlled by one man.

Moreover, he is more interested in profits than editorial standards. The publication in the *News of the World* of the memoirs of Christine Keeler, the prostitute whose affair with John Profumo helped to bring down the Macmillan government, was condemned by the Press Council. The page three nude in *The Sun* made the paper notorious but highly profitable.

Americans are supposed to admire success and rugged individualism, but many were appalled when Murdoch bought the ailing *New York Post*, a liberal newspaper, and took it down-market in search of hard-hat readers. *The Columbia Journalism*

Review said that he was doing the devil's work by appealing to the basest passions and appetites.

Murdoch's ruthlessness is legendary. He became a US citizen in order to acquire television stations, and one editor was hired and fired within 48 hours. He is also a compulsive gambler. I cannot think of any other newspaper proprietor who would have dismissed 5,000 obstreperous printers and moved four of his titles to Wapping. But despite his reputation, he

has never been the "dirty digger" of popular imagination.

His grandfather was a Presbyterian minister from Scotland and his father a respected newspaper publisher. Young Rupert attended Australia's most exclusive boarding school, and read politics, philosophy and economics at Oxford, where he was converted to socialism.

Murdoch was only 21 when his father died, and had a lifetime before him to expand the family business, which had been reduced to two



small newspapers in Adelaide. He made a flying start; and before he was 50, when he bought Times Newspapers, he controlled the world's largest media empire spread across three continents. The youthful socialist had also become a conservative, which would have pleased his father, who had been a pillar of the old Australian establishment.

But Murdoch, by his own choice, remained an outsider, more comfortable in the first-class cabin of airliners than in gentlemen's clubs in London, New York and Sydney. He constantly circumnavigates the globe visiting his properties and looking for others to buy. At one time he had a permanent booking for the first Monday of the month on the Concorde flight from London to New York. He entertains and conducts business in restaurants although he has a house in Belgravia, a large apartment in New York and a ranch in Australia.

Being an outsider is one of Murdoch's strengths; he is impervious to the attention and flattery which have tamed other freebooters. He lives quietly and modestly with his family, he rarely drinks and his only fun, as he once said, is owning newspapers. It was inevitable that he should turn his attention to the *Financial Times*.

He was not the first. Gary Klesch of Quadrex Securities, Li Ka-Shing, the Hong Kong financier, and Olivetti's Carlo de Benedetti were attracted, and no wonder. Pearson has an estimated market value of £2,270 million, and has been compared with a rich man's bowl of baubles. Apart from the *FT*, which incidentally owns half of *The Economist*, they include the Westminster Press chain of provincial newspapers and the Penguin and Longman publishing houses. An American subsidiary, Viking, published the best-selling *Spycatcher*. Then there are holdings in Lazard Brothers, the merchant bank, oil services, Madame Tussaud's, Yorkshire Television, Royal Doulton china and the Château Latour vineyard. Profits this year are expected to rise to £139 million.

Pearson has always been run by the family, whose members have about 20 per cent of the stock. City gossip has it that the group resembled a feudal fief until Lord Blakenham assumed the chairmanship from his uncle, Lord Cowdray, and began to realize its immense growth potential. His reorganization was successful, hence the predators, but the *FT* is still relatively under-developed.

The paper, which celebrates its centenary next year, has nevertheless long dominated the British market for financial, commercial and industrial news. Since opening a second plant in Frankfurt, it has achieved an international status rivalled only by *The Wall Street Journal*. Yet in some ways it is still the City's local newspaper it once was before Sir Gordon Newton, its brilliant editor for 22 years, took over in 1950.

Like most slogans, "No FT, No Comment" is somewhat misleading. The paper is a worthy

but dull read, as many of its journalists admit, unless you are interested in what Lord Blakenham's ancestors no doubt despised as trade. The reporting is objective, but it is a neutered rather than a neutral paper. For instance, there have been more scandals in the City in recent years than ever before, but very few have been investigated by the *FT*.



Murdoch:
he is as swift
to act and as
unpredictable
as ever. If he
needs to sell
The Times
to acquire
the *FT*, he will

Similarly with politics. The coverage and comment are comprehensive, but the government, Tory or Labour, is rarely criticized. The *Observer* recently reported a standing joke among the *FT*'s staff: if the Russians invaded, the *FT* would gently accommodate itself, with a leading article on the lines of "While we were in many ways opposed to the invasion, there are certain aspects of the new regime's policies which may be both timely and appropriate..."

The columnists can be less restrained, but oddly enough this cautious approach to news is one of the paper's strengths. Its readers, numbering some 200,000, want to know what is happening on the exchanges and in the markets, and no other paper gives them the information they require.

This cautious approach has paid off splendidly. The paper is grossly fat with advertising; but it has been less successful elsewhere. The *FT* has not yet switched to computerized photo-composition, and is still paying linotype operators about £40,000 a year. Arguably it can afford to do so but its failure to exploit information technology is much more serious.

This technology has created a genuine revolution in communications by disseminating information instantaneously to any part of the world where a visual display unit can be plugged in. The City's Big Bang would have been impossible without it, and there appears to be no limit to further expansion. Reuters news agency was the pioneer, and is now an international leader in the provision of financial and similar information. The *FT* was not unaware of the possibilities—its technological coverage is excellent—but nevertheless did not make a bid for similar systems. Murdoch would have taken the plunge if he had owned the *FT*.

Presumably that is his intention, although if he made a bid it would have to be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The

bid would almost certainly be rejected, which no doubt explains why he claimed to be interested only in "the possibility of cooperation" between his company, News Corporation, and Pearson. Blakenham said that "£200 million's a hell of a price to pay for a chat", but that can hardly be his last word. Murdoch is a tenacious man; and Robert Maxwell, still sore from losing *Today* to him, has said that he would not give Murdoch "a free ride" if News Corporation tried to take over Pearson.

There is in fact more than one possibility for cooperation between the two groups. Pearson earlier made a bid for *The South China Morning Post*, published in Hong Kong, with the intention of using its presses to print an Asian edition of the *FT*. It was beaten by Murdoch—who else?—who would no doubt be willing to negotiate a printing contract. The *FT* could become a truly global newspaper with a strong presence in the Pacific basin, which promises to become the largest industrial and financial area in the world.

Analysts also believe that cooperation between their publishing houses—Murdoch owns or has stakes in Collins, Bartholomew, Geographia, Times Books and Harper & Row in New York—would increase their ability to compete with the big American publishers. Blakenham has reluctantly conceded that there could be scope for joint ventures. The two men met but nothing concrete has emerged.

That said, Murdoch's first love remains newspapers. His father arranged with Lord Beaverbrook to teach him the craft on the *Daily Express* when he came down from Oxford. He still likes to take off his jacket and show his editors how to make up a front page. He admires the *FT*, and it may be no coincidence that the printing capacity of his Wapping plant is being doubled. But what of *The Times*? Clearly, he cannot hope to own both papers, but it may be that Murdoch is bored with the old Thunderer, as the received wisdom has it. Certainly he does not hold it in awe as did the late Lord Thomson. He has increased its circulation by about 50 per cent and almost doubled its advertising revenue. For the first time in many years it is a profitable paper and there is little more that he can do in the face of the intense competition from *The Guardian*, *The Independent* and *The Daily Telegraph*. He has also been criticized intensely for *The Times*'s loss of quality.

The *Financial Times* is a much more attractive prospect. There is a tremendous potential for expansion, and not only with an Asian edition. It is not too late to launch a rival to Reuters and other electronic information systems. But above all Murdoch is a newspaper man and Pearson owns other publishing interests. It has a stake in *Business Magazine* and, more important, owns the Westminster Press which has 41 local British newspapers.

The establishment may be against Murdoch but this has never deterred him. If anything, it sharpens his appetite. On his past performance Pearson should not be complacent. He is as swift to act and as unpredictable as ever and if he needs to sell *The Times* to acquire the *FT* and all its potential, he will. Murdoch, unlike most newspapermen, is not sentimental ○

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THE BUSINESS OF CHARITY BALLS

Conspicuous compassion is all the rage and charities have never had it so good. John Sweeney finds out why. Photographs by Barry Swaebe

"SHE'S COMING," someone whispered, "She's coming." Her Royal Highness the Duchess of York hove into view wearing a sky-blue dress bedecked with big coal-black bows which suggested nothing in creation so much as three fruit-eating bats coming to rest on a mango tree.

A spasm of excitement passed through the party-goers, propelling them erect from their gilt chairs as Her Royal Highness approached with a slightly lolloping gait, her auburn hair capped with a sparkling tiara. She moved through the cavernous, turquoise-lined marquee, her dress setting eyebrows leaping and diving. The dress was by no means stylish, but it had a certain sinister appeal. It was so remarkable that its photograph made the front page of the next day's *Daily Express*:

"DIAMOND FERGIE BRINGS A SPARKLE TO TOWN

"The Duchess of York's sparkling smile outshone the diamonds at Tiffany's 150th anniversary ball last night."

But the breathless *Express* reader learnt what all this was for only in the fifth paragraph: "The glittering occasion at Syon House, West London, was in aid of Action Research for the Crippled Child, of which the Duchess is president."

That is often the way with charity balls. There is so much fuss about who was there, about what they were wearing, about which company sponsored the big do, that the purpose of the whole evening, charity, tends to slip from the front of people's minds. But who cares if these balls seem surreal celebrations of another age's luxury, if good comes from them?

Charity balls are graceful and gracious occasions which are becoming more and more popular, drawing in more companies hungry for front-page publicity and more deserving charities, hungry for money. "Charity vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up," nevertheless the

conspicuous compassion business has never had it so good; nor have the huge number of charities which benefit from the largesse of the rich ever done so well.

Consider Action Research for the Crippled Child: in the words of the ball programme the charity exists to research into polio, the rubella virus and the unborn child, and spina bifida. Tiffany's, the famous American jewellery firm which last year reopened its shop in London after a break of almost half a century, acquires front-page publicity, everybody at the ball has a good time, and the money raised is put to use by reducing the number of babies born with wretched deformities.

When Her Royal Highness and her party had made their way to the top table and settled down, the throng of London and New York's top jewellery people sat down too, as if someone had flicked a switch. After the royal entrée there was a buzz of catarrh-driven coughing and carat-punctuated conversation, and faces swung round like guns on a battleship, checking out the other guests.

They were all there, Viscount Linley, the Baroness di Portanova, Paloma Picasso, Peregine Moncrieffe of That Ilk, Miss Caroline Tooth, Mrs Nicolas Boggis-Rolfe, Lucy Beckwith-Smith, Miss Torie Legge-Bourke, Angela Muir-Beddall. English aristocrats, minor European royalty and rich Americans were all paying £150 a head for the pleasure of passing the evening in the virtually invisible company of a breathing, kicking, grinning, genuine duchess.

There was serious money at the Tiffany's Ball that night, ready to dip deep into its pocket. The men were infrequently handsome, the majority tyre-tummied; the women wore expensive dresses and glittered. A line from Alexander Pope flickered through the mind: "We may see the small value God has for riches by the people he gives them to."

The dining marquee was an unworldly sight. The only breath of life-as-it-is came when the jingling chit-chat was annihilated by the boom of the jumbos as they tracked low over the

grounds of Syon House, Heathrow-bound. Everything had been done to heighten the element of fantasy. The marquee had been turned into a bejewelled magic forest from a Walt Disney feature. As well as a fake "sky", a specially commissioned marquee lining in Tiffany's colours, and a boarded red forest floor, the marquee poles had been decorated to look like anthropomorphic trees. The poles were covered with twigs and flowers, with the odd fairy light. Strings of fake pearls hung down. Fresh-faced waiters and waitresses fluttered and scuttled to and fro with plates and bottles, corkscrews and glasses.

The 80 or so waiters-for-the-night ploughed their furrows amid the frothy turquoise forestry, sluicing the alimentary canals of 360 or so socialites. Each table was named after a gem, from which it took a floral theme: "Ruby", "Pearl", "Opal", "Emerald" (my table) and the "Tiffany Diamond", where the centre of attention sat.

It must be funny to be a member of the royal family. To be gawked at the whole evening. To have some pig of a journalist poke fun at your dress. To appear as regal and relaxed as is possible in front of hundreds of perfect strangers. There are times when it must feel like being the first panda at London Zoo.

Rosamund Monckton, the extremely well-connected London Tiffany's managing director and the chief organizer of the evening, who was wearing a Jacques Azagoury confection of peacock and fuchsia, was forthright about the importance of the royal: "Getting a royal is the key. Long in advance you have to start by deciding which royal you want, and we were lucky enough to get the Duchess of York. It gives an added glamour and it's so *British*."

Una-Mary Parker was not at the Tiffany Ball, but she knows the business well. Now a successful writer of thick and erotic novels, Una-Mary was a professional organizer of charity balls and she still does the Poppy Ball for the Royal British Legion. She is as savvy as a Romford car dealer despite her deep-voiced Knightsbridge vowels, and is blunt about the

Outshining the diamonds?: The Duchess of York arrives at Tiffany's anniversary ball



Tiffany ball-goers, from left: Mr and Mrs Stefan Lersten; Colonel and Mrs Edward Remington-Hobbs; the Hon Rosamund Monckton, Miss

role of royalty in the business of charity balls. "The first point is that you can never get a royal to come to a commercial evening. So a firm needs a charity to get the royal and the royal is necessary because he or she has the pulling power. A royal sells seats and gives the evening that special lift.

"Having a royal at a ball a firm has sponsored does wonders for its public image. The company would have to spend huge amounts on advertising and promotion to equal the coverage in the newspapers. As well as that it may benefit from just advertising in the ball programme—incidentally, that is where the real money is made. A page of advertising sells to a big company for, say, between £300 and £700. What then happens is this: you make a deal so that the company buys a table for 10 and the charity gives the company a free page of advertising in the programme. So the company gets the advertising without paying tax or VAT for the ad. It is all set against tax, you see. And there are cross-deals with the wine and the food and so on: it inter-locks. It is tax deductible, the company gets very good publicity and it's cheap at the price."

The ball programme certainly repaid close attention. To pass the rather slow dance of time before the first course appeared, I counted the number of pages which mentioned the charity and the jewellers. Action Research for a Crippled Child rated mentions on a total of nine pages; Tiffany's scored on 34.

On the "Emerald" table, which boasted green flowers and was dotted with tiny green squiggles, no doubt worthless, people were get-

ting peckish. Earlier I had been introduced to Mark Birley, the owner of Annabel's nightclub and, said my informant, "one of the wealthiest men in London". A distinguished gentleman, dressed in an immaculate dinner jacket, he had stared directly in front of him for minutes on end.

"Excuse me," said Mr Birley. This was going to be funny. "I'm awfully hungry. Do you mind if I have your bread roll?" Eventually, the first course arrived. *Gallo melon with Port and Grapes, Basket of Warm Rolls.*

And conversation, of a surreal kind. To my right sat the exquisite, porcelain-boned figure of Lady Annunziata Asquith, said to be The Most Beautiful Woman in London. And not any old Asquith, either, but an Asquith Asquith and no mistake. Lady Annunziata was wearing a dress she had designed herself a year ago for the Venice ball, a "mad" sequined top and long blue skirt, which looked very nice. Lady Annunziata gave me a résumé of the other guests at our table.

On my left was Mrs Ed Victor, a grit-voiced American lady in a slinky bloody-red number and a face which shone like shiny-lined, the like of which is ordinarily seen on Alan Whicker documentaries.

"What do you do?" She had been a legal adviser for film makers. She mentioned a few names. Her husband was Ed Victor, who was seated on Lady Annunziata's right. They were talking about Michael Holroyd's amazing book contract for the three volumes of his George Bernard Shaw biography (sold for £650,000), before it had been

publicly announced. A lot of business is done at these balls. Someone said Victor looked like a cross between a tennis-player and an Old Testament prophet.

"What does your husband do?" [He was Ed Victor.] "Yes, but what does he do?" "He's a literary agent."

"Which agency?" "The Ed Victor agency."

Ed Victor, it turns out, is one of the most prosperous and successful literary agents in the country. Iris Murdoch, Douglas Adams, Stephen Spender and Edward Behr are some of his clients.

Reading the ball programme seemed safer than conversation. The feature appearing on the Tiffany-sponsored Polo Team, numbering the Marquess of Milford Haven, Grant Boyd-Gibbins, William Roberts and William Lucas, occupied the mind until the next course. *Roast Boned Quail stuffed with a Gamme Mousseleine and served on a Bed of Red Cabbage sautéed with Lardons and Wholegrain Mustard. Petit Pois studded with Button Onions. Wild and Basmati Rice studded with Celery and Thyme.*

Yet more drink. The programme enthused about the new Tiffany scent in a two-page advertisement:

"Tiffany is a lyric yet sophisticated blend created in the finest French tradition. The top note harmonizes the richness of Indian jasmine and damascena rose with the vibrancy of Italian mandarin and fleur d'orange. For warmth and distinctiveness at the heart of the fragrance, Tiffany combines muguet and violet

leaves with bourgogne de cassis. Finally, to create a lingering aura..."

A waiter arrived with an equally exotic concoction. *Brie en Croûte served with a Crisp Melange of Leaves and Walnuts.*

On the other side of the table, Lady Annunziata whispered, was Anthony Oppenheimer. Suddenly, it struck home that the "Emerald" table was a fixture for Superlative People: The Most Beautiful Woman in London, The Wittiest Man in London, The Best Literary Agent in London. One of the Richest Men in London...

Back to the programme: "... Tiffany draws upon the resonant timbre of sandalwood, amber..."

Chocolate Bowls filled with a Strawberry Soufflé.

"... vertvert and vanilla..."

Coffee and Chocolates, thank heavens.

A hush settled on the gathering when the duchess rose to her feet. Her Sloane accent pierced the clatter of spoon-on-bowl and fluted to the turquoise sky. Her speech was not a *tour de force* nor, it must be said, terribly interesting, but it had a certain pleasant wholesomeness about it, typical of her and evoking images of home-made scones, blackberry jam, bring-and-buy sales. Her words were full of some inexpressible quality which spoke to decent Englishness.

"And I believe we are, what..." She could not read her writing. Oh! Ho! Ho! Ho! She laughed nervously and continued, "... in for two more surprises before this evening is over."

The biggest question for the organizer of a

charity ball is this: which royal? Is it better to invite the Duchess of York for her guisiness or the Princess of Wales for her perfume-counter beauty? Female royalty are both more available and more popular. In the charity ball business, there is an acknowledged chart of royal popularity which has little to do with the usual court protocol.

The royals prefer to spread themselves out at these charity balls, so it is very rare to get both the Prince and Princess of Wales at the same party. The latter is, of course, the number one royal, followed by the Queen, the Duchess of York, with the Princess Royal coming up fourth. Panting behind her is Princess Michael of Kent, whose Teutonic good looks and exciting private life make her a big attraction. But there is a problem with Princess Michael: because she is not on the Civil List, charity organizers may find that they are required to pay some of her expenses.

Sixth is Princess Alexandra, the Honourable Mrs Angus Ogilvy. Seventh is the Duchess of Gloucester, followed by the Duchess of Kent. In ninth place is Princess Margaret who, it is said, can be utterly charming "if she's surrounded by handsome and amusing men."

The first surprise of the evening promised by the Duchess of York was the Right Honourable the Earl Gowrie, flourishing a gavel for the auction (he is chairman of Sotheby's). Grey Gowrie, a man who gave up his job as Arts Minister because he could not live on his government salary, rattled through the valuables, prising absurd sums of money from the well-off. "£2,000... £2,200." No one from the

Emerald table attempted to bid as the pair of platinum and diamond carlins with emerald and aquamarine drops, designed by Paloma Picasso, came up for sale. In fact the Emerald table did not bid at all.

Una-Mary Parker has an aversion to fundraising auctions. "I won't have an auction because in the first five minutes 95 per cent of the people there have been excluded, and it's just left to a handful of millionaires fighting against one another and showing off." Her solution is bingo at £5 a head, so virtually everyone can join in, and there was a hint of pride in her voice as she leant forward and confided: "I've had all the royal family playing bingo, you know. The fun is in the participation. If an evening is to go well, there has to be fun." "£2,400... £2,600..." Gowrie growled.

Nearly £27,000 was raised that evening from the auction alone, although the total might have been higher had not one drunken joker bid for and won an 18 carat gold bangle inlaid with opal, mother of pearl, black jade and coral, without having the money to pay for it. It was re-auctioned, but fatally after the heat of the moment, fetching £2,200 less than its original price. The villain of this piece laughed about her *faux-pas* later in the evening. She had youth and beauty but not much sense. She was so drunk she wrote down her name and number in my notebook. But there will be no naming of names here.

The rest of the evening passed in a blur and whirl of people, bangs, fizzes and bubbly. The ball programme and a few indistinct memories



Paloma Picasso, Mr William Chaney (Tiffany's chairman); Miss Zena Kahn and Miss Joanne Kahn; Mr Ned Ryan and Mrs Bill Collins



are the only guides. Pipes and Drums of the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards. Jugglers. Dancing to The Pasadena Roof Orchestra and Terry Lightfoot and His Band. The second surprise was the Midnight Spectacular.

This turned out to be a firework display which cracked and crackled and tortured the midnight air above Syon House, culminating in a brilliant display lighting up "Tiffany 150" and then "London 1", which referred to the first anniversary of the jewellers' opening a shop in London last year. That's not quite right. Tiffany's had a shop in London from 1868 to 1941, which was then closed.

Perhaps the fireworks which lit up London nights in 1941 were too brilliant by half.

The Monday morning after the night of the ball, I talked to the Hon Rosamund Monckton at her office in Old Bond Street. She has a photograph of herself on the wall, showing a flash of her lean, brown and handsome body plunging into a pool in the West Indies.

Along with Celia and Sarah from the office and William Bartholomew from Juliana's, stock exchange-quoted party organizers, Rosamund master-minded the party. She is delighted with the way it went, and hopes that it will make somewhere between £35,000 and £40,000, roughly half of the cost of staging it. She pointed to a sheaf of thank you letters, some of them containing yet more money for the charity, and let slip that Her Royal Highness had had a good time, leaving the party at quarter to three in the morning.

"The preparation," she says, "took nearly a year. The seating plan was a major nightmare, getting the numbers right; people are so lazy about replying to invitations. We were all in tears the night before, an enormous strain, but all my staff were still there at four in the morning..."

What about the noise from the jumbos? Rosamund replied, "Yes. The aircraft noise was the only intrusion of the 20th century. You know the whole thing reminded me of a scene in Alain-Fournier's *Le Grand Meaulnes*, where this man has walked miles through the night and stumbles across a party in a grand house: very surreal. It's very good that we still do this sort of thing. Not for any snob thing, but throwing a ball is part of a great tradition."

On the way out, Rosamund showed off the Tiffany window display at the front of the shop, which depicted something in a rather difficult-to-decode gem collage. It looked like a dredger in a sandstorm.

"What is it?"

"It's a female navel. It affirms reproduction and creativity. We've been in business 150 years but we are still creating, see?"

Another night, another royal, another £150-a-head ball. The Princess of Wales looked ravishing as she shimmered into Claridge's wearing a strapless ankle-length black dress with longer-than-elbow-length deep pink gloves and a diamond necklace.

Her photograph appeared in colour on the

front page of *Today*. *Déjà vu*. Just like at the Tiffany's do, the star royal was a distant prospect that remained distant. Some social climbers, Una-Mary Parker has told me, willingly pay up to £5,000 to charity to be introduced to a royal. The royal is well-briefed and generally thanks the donor for his or her sterling work, but money cannot buy a place at the top table as it did recently on the Prince and Princess of Wales's visit to the US.

This time the Princess of Wales was making an appearance at a Pink and Black Gala



Good times don't change: Left, the Ypres Ball in 1922 and, above, the Tiffany Ball 1987

Evening for the Elizabeth FitzRoy Homes, underneath a life-size blow-up of a Toyota Starlet GL, the star prize in the charity raffle. The FitzRoy Homes is a small charity, enjoying its 25th anniversary, and now runs 10 homes for the mentally handicapped around the country. Marks & Spencer, Guinness, Borax, John Player and The Haslemere Wine Company had all advertised in the shiny pink and black programme. The great and the good were there under the bright chandelier lights: Lady Cecil Cameron of Lochiel, the Earl of Euston, the Countess of Euston, Lady Virginia Kerr, the Countess of Lichfield, Mr and Mrs Pratt Thompson, Baroness Patrick von Stauffenberg, Lady Henrietta St George, the Lord and Lady Tanlaw, the Lord and Lady Widoger, all names likely to grace the society pages.

There was no big firm sponsoring the Pink and Black evening; it was chiefly a charity affair which is a bigger undertaking. Una-Mary Parker says that some charities are naïve in the way they run their own balls. "They are still thinking about bazaars and tombolas. The people at the grass-roots get very jealous and they feel ousted. They slave away for years and don't understand a ball is big business. They don't realize that to make a buck, you've got to spend a buck. It's all part of a trade-off. This is what charities have to think of: there has to be something in it for everybody."

Una-Mary may be caustic, but she also used to bring the money in by the bucketful. She said that she used to try to double the cost of the ball for the charity concerned: if a function cost £12,000, she would hope to reap, say, £25,000 profit. "It would break down like this: you could make, say, £17,000 in profit just from the advertising in the programme, £5,000 or so

from painless fund-raising on the night and the rest from ticket sales and odds and ends." She added there are times when charities have made less money out of a ball because the chief aim is to raise its profile and give it a better image.

As 150 or so denizens of high society ate their *Salmis de Canard aux Champignons des Bois*, which was not so hot by the time it reached my table, the oddness of it all began to strike home. Someone like myself who pays a great deal of money to go to this sort of ball finds that he is parachuted into a group of people, almost certainly strangers, and faced with an evening of tentative conversation and long periods of neck-craning in search of the figure of a half-hidden royal celebrity.

Because of a chapter of accidents and misunderstandings, the evening turned out to be pretty ticklish because journalists were not meant to be there.

Someone on the table had placed a wise 5p bet that "the man in the pink-and-black velcro stick-on bow tie was fishy". The charity's psychiatrist, seated just one place away, went on the attack.

"What do you do again?"

"Er, import-export, that sort of thing."

"What do you mean, precisely?"

"Er... export credit guarantees..."

"How's it work?"

"Well, see, if there's a chap who wants to buy some micro-waves in South Korea, we, er, the company I work for, sort of back him up. Sort of."

"What's your address so we can get in touch with you?"

For the rest of the evening, the psychiatrist kept on introducing me to charity functionaries as "a banker". For the moment the lady next to me came to the rescue by talking about the late Elizabeth FitzRoy. She was a wonderful, headstrong, gutsy lady, who took up a mentally handicapped baby boy, Michael, in 1943, and called him her own. She brought up the boy with love. Elizabeth pinched and saved and set up a home for herself, Michael, and other handicapped children on the basis of "small is beautiful".

Our conversation died when the charity auction started. The Christie's auctioneer had more verve than Lord Gowrie, but raised less money; even so, humdrum lots went under the hammer for several hundred pounds. Table D did not bid. Among those seated with me were the man from Toyota, the charity's psychiatrist, a couple related to one of the charity's trustees, and HRH's detective, who had observed that this was a rather good party compared to some of the functions he had to attend. They were all decent people and some of them had given years of work to the charity. Their faces froze as the prices rose: "£500... £600." No one dared twitch in case it was mistaken for a bid. Everyone clapped when a man bought a case of whisky for £300.

I remembered the line from *Middlemarch*. "One must be poor to know the luxury of giving." Certainly it was a hardship for bidders.

The Claridge's evening was a success. The Princess danced as only a princess can; everyone left with the warm glow of having attended one of the big charity fixtures of the autumn and, what is more, FitzRoy homes were £20,000 better off. Charity balls are a mirror of our times. While people have money they will continue to flourish. Where better for money to display its compassion? ○



Lui, aka Viktor Louis: journalists say his use of others' miseries to furnish his own coffers places him beyond the realms of good taste

RUSSIA'S GLASNOST SURVIVOR

For two decades, Vitali Yevgenneovich Lui has profited from the persecution of dissidents under the Soviet regime as one of the KGB's premier informants. Now that propaganda has fallen into more subtle hands, what has become of Lui? By Robin Gedye

IT COULD reasonably have been expected that two-and-a-half years of *glasnost* might have made 63-year-old Vitali Yevgenneovich Lui, self-styled journalist and head of the KGB's foreign disinformation section, redundant. After all, the much-vaunted policy of openness should have sprinkled enough information across the sterile wastelands of Soviet newswrap to suggest a graceful retirement to the prime pedestal of propagandist prattle.

So it was not a little surprising when, fresh from a £30,000 liver transplant operation at Kensington's Cromwell Hospital last March, Viktor Louis (as he likes his name to be spelt) began tapping on the editorial doors of one of West Germany's better tabloids, apparently to his old tricks. With all the subtlety of a

dirty-postcard salesman, Louis offered colour pictures of Mathias Rust, the 19-year-old West German pilot who landed in Red Square last May and was sentenced to four years' imprisonment in Moscow's KGB-run, maximum-security Lefortovo jail. The photographs showed Rust at work and play—at his typewriter, in his cell, eating lunch and in court. West Germany's downmarket *Bunte* magazine picked up the photos for a five-figure sum, but was unable to offset these costs through further sales to British newspapers because they found the price too high. Louis's fee, as was customary, was paid into one of a series of numbered bank accounts he possesses in the West.

For more than two decades Viktor Louis has been the "informed source" behind many of the major news stories that have leaked from Moscow. His "firsts" have refused to consort with the news of the fall of Khrushchev, the meeting between Kosygin and Chou En Lai, Kosygin's death in 1980, the leaking to the West of Khrushchev's memoirs in a carefully edited edition and the return of Svetlana Stalin to Moscow. He was in the vanguard of efforts to discredit Svetlana after she defected to the United States in 1967 and he peddled an "officially approved" draft of her first book which the KGB conveniently found on her desk after her flight. Louis was also responsible for selling the manuscript of Solzhenitsyn's *Cancer Ward* in the West so that it could subsequently be exploited by the Kremlin as evidence of its author's anti-communism.

Louis and his British wife Jennifer (née Statham, a former nanny to a British naval attaché in Moscow) are reputed to make between £60,000 and £100,000 a year in Western currency which, because of Jennifer's nationality, can be banked abroad. They earn between £42,000 and £45,000 annually on the sale, in hard currency, of an information booklet to Moscow's huge foreign community. It carries the telephone numbers of all the expatriates in Moscow and scores of advertisements for foreign and Soviet companies based there. Being Russian, Louis can exchange his hard currency into roubles at five times the official rate for foreign currency. By Soviet standards he is a multi-millionaire.

For the KGB his broad-and-butter work has always been stories on dissidents. Information about the activities of such prominent figures as Sakharov, Scharansky or Orlov served to defuse concern in the West without requiring

the Soviet government to acknowledge the importance of a group it regarded as lower than common criminals and equal to traitors. Calously exploiting the plight of Andrey Sakharov, and his wife Yelena Bonner, Louis supplied West German television stations and the popular *Bild* Zeitung with moving and still pictures of Sakharov's agony while in internal exile in the closed city of Gorky. In return they paid hundreds of thousands of Deutschmarks into Louis's foreign bank accounts.

The release of such prominent political hostages, and the Soviet government's more open attitude towards such innocuous titbits of information, has dates as ingenious of Central Committee meetings (usually Louis's preserve), could have led one to believe that under *glasnost* his days were numbered. But his services have still been in evidence. It was Louis, for example, who in September told the world that President Gorbachev had acute food poisoning. Harking back to the days when, for Louis, health bulletins on Soviet leaders were a matter of course, the story—hotly denied by official Kremlin spokesmen—demonstrated that he remained firmly entrenched amid the headline KGB faction, still very much opposed to Gorbachev.

There has always been a large group of journalists and diplomats in Moscow who have refused to consort with Louis because of his KGB affiliations and his shamelessly mercenary attitude towards the persecuted and helpless. They argue that his background and the callous use of other people's miseries to furnish his own coffers, together with the pathetic pretence he makes of being both journalist and unofficial spokesman, place him beyond the realms of good taste.

Louis lacks the smooth exterior of such pundits as Vladimir Posner, the Fifth Avenue-suited commentator rolled out by the American and British television networks each time an "official Soviet reaction" to events is needed. In the guise of *Daily Express* correspondent, Louis continues to be welcome at Western embassy functions where he drops snippets of salacious gossip to diplomats and journalists to whom he remains an enigma and an outsider.

Those who use Louis (and are used by him) are frequently invited to his *dacha*, 20 miles outside Moscow, where his two-storey wooden house, complete with a tennis court that doubles as an ice rink in winter, is set among the pine trees of a small village reserved for officially-approved artists and writers. His country home is filled with the latest electrical gadgetry picked up on regular trips to the West.

The restored Bentley he drives through the streets of Moscow, which he alone, among the whole privileged Soviet elite, is allowed to run on foreign currency, is set among the pine trees of a small village reserved for officially-approved artists and writers. His country home is filled with the latest electrical gadgetry picked up on regular trips to the West.

But Louis has found, only too recently, that his wealth and privilege count for nothing. He yearns for social acceptability and was once heard to admit that his greatest regret was his inability to effect for his children an easy entry into society. Of his three sons, two of whom were educated at British public schools, the eldest, Nicholas, 25, who studied postgraduate history at Oxford, is finding it almost impossible to find a decent job. "Because of his father he falls between two stools," Louis lamented. Nicholas would like to work for newspapers in

Britain, but all his attempts to find employment have failed because of his father's reputation. Of his other sons, Michael, 23, recently found a job as an interpreter at the construction site of the new American embassy in Moscow, while Anthony, 18, completed his school studies in the United States.

Louis's origins will remain the milestone that no amount of cocktail party pleasantries will ever remove. After studying languages at Moscow University he began, in the late 40s, to work for foreign embassies. Various reports have him acting as messenger and general dogbody for the New Zealand, Swedish and Brazilian missions. Then suddenly, aged 21, he was arrested and sent to a Siberian prison camp. According to Louis it was for spying against the Soviet Union in the embassies he worked for. At the time he was just another statistic in Stalin's overcrowded Gulag and the real reason for his imprisonment will never be known. But on emerging from the camps in 1956, he sought employment among Moscow's handful of English-speaking correspondents who remember that different grounds were given for his disappearance. It appeared that he had been transported to the Gulag for petty black-marketeering.

In *GGB*, a book by John Barron, Louis is described by an inmate of the Ninth Spassky Department Camp in Kazakhstan as arriving in the summer of 1954 wearing a pith helmet and an outfit "resembling a British tropical dress uniform". Finding a new lease of life for the talents he exercised while circulating among Moscow's diplomats, Louis ingratiated himself with the authorities in the camps by continuing to act as an informer. His targets in the Gulag were the intellectuals who, according to Barron, "found themselves undergoing rigorous interrogation" after confiding in Louis.

One of his first employers when he was released from the camps was Edmund Stevens, the doyen of foreign correspondents in Moscow and still an occasional contributor to *The Sunday Times*. Stevens liked Louis's enthusiasm and found he had an endless supply of suggestions for good stories. But Louis soon moved on, changing employers almost every five or six months, some say in order to give his true masters a broader perspective of the journalistic community.

Meanwhile Louis continued to dabble in selling black-market loans to Westerners. As he grew more confident in his translating work, he offered the occasional story to British newspapers that did not have correspondents in Moscow. Thus he obtained his first toe-hold on the journalistic ladder, eventually becoming the correspondent for *The Daily Express*, *The Evening News* and latterly *Bild Zeitung*.

It was in these heady days that he began to contemplate a retirement outside his beloved Russia. The arrival of Gorbachev and Moscow's "information explosion" led him to firm up his plans for departure. He and his kind are part of an era that is rapidly fading. It is time to capitalize and clear out.

In July last year Louis asked contacts in the Foreign Office whether he would be allowed to retire to Britain. "We understand," came the diplomatic reply, "that an application for permanent residency in this country is unlikely to be treated favourably." ☐

Robin Gedye was Moscow correspondent for *The Daily Telegraph*



HOW SELINA SCOTT KEEPS THE WORLD AT A DISTANCE

Businessmen and television moguls court her; the Press alternately raves and reviles. What is the truth behind the public profile? David Leitch investigates



Getting ahead: Scott's evolution from 1983, inset left, through 1984 and 1985 to the present

ABOUT EIGHT years ago the British arm of Mark McCormack's American management company began to look for a female personality who possessed style, poise and independence; a woman who was palpably suited to the 1980s, competent and intelligent but not to the point that it overshadowed her physical allure.

There were a number of creditable television performers available but they all fell short of the McCormack ideal. Angela Rippon was one and indeed she signed up to benefit from McCormack's combination of management and discreet commercialism. But there was about Miss Rippon a hint of hauteur and a certain primness. Her contemporaries in tele-

vision did not meet the requirements either: Anna Ford was too serious, Sue Lawley too hard and Judith Chalmers too homely. They simply did not possess the glamour that McCormack's company, International Management Group, wanted. Besides, their fame was founded in the 70s and their talents were all parochially journalistic.

Selina Scott's provenance was much the same as Anna Ford's and Angela Rippon's. She came to national prominence quite suddenly when she replaced Anna Ford on *News At Ten* at Independent Television News in May, 1981. At the time, the ITN press releases drew a picture of a relatively unsophisticated

woman of 30 who had worked on a local newspaper, served as a public relations officer for the Isle of Bute and performed solidly as a Grampian Television as a local news reporter and presenter. She had lived a rural life some 20 miles from Aberdeen and was reported to enjoy the countryside, collecting junk and attending auctions. This was a woman of plain tastes and ordinary good looks who was going to miss the fresh air. She was, as she protested frequently, hardly the stuff of a sex symbol.

The change over the last six-and-a-half years has been dramatic and is captured by her assured appearance at a studio in central London for the shooting of the cover of this magazine. She will now work with only a handful of photographers and she takes a close interest in the way that they present her. When she arrives in Tony McGee's studio in Farringdon Road, she is immediately surrounded by people fussing her, not least Mr McGee, who instructs his assistants to clear somewhere for Miss Scott to sit down. She is relaxed and self-assured and still wears the make-up from a previous shoot. She behaves like a model and strips off to change with all the nonchalance of a professional. This is not a newscaster but someone who is fastidious and co-operative, even charming, in the knowledge that her packaging is important. Her behaviour is reminiscent of a film star preparing publicity stills. Indeed, she showed great interest in the final product and politely ventured to suggest which was the best photograph.

When Selina Scott arrived in London at the beginning of the 80s, the popular Press presented the standard questionnaire to her: What were her passions? Did she have a boyfriend? Did she like animals? Did she miss the countryside? Was she ambitious? Did she have a mentor? Did she want children? She did not yield and, while the journalists had been charmed in her presence, when they came to transcribe their notes and tape recordings they found they had nothing but a courteous rehearsal of the known data.

Many began to extemporize on Miss Scott's life and loves; some began to investigate, calling on friends and relatives in Yorkshire and Scotland, and interviewing slight acquaintances. This did not meet with a great deal of success: nobody remembered much about her in the offices of the Dundee newspaper where she had worked for two years, and a man from the Bute tourist board, where she was the PR, could summon only some ungenerous remarks about her inefficiency.

She became intriguing, but she also became more glamorous, more self-assured, more metropolitan. She transferred to the BBC to help launch its breakfast television programme with Frank Bough, whose overt affection and pleasure at her arrival was all too visible. Her following grew. Although the audience was far less than for *Neve's 10*, there was an intimacy in seeing her girlish disarray in the early morning. There was much talk in the Press about the toll of rising early and her lack of social life, perhaps because the journalists had rather new to say. They could not decide whether she was an enigma on the lines of Garbo or simply dull. Broadly speaking, the men from Fleet Street opted for the former, while their female colleagues embraced the latter. The crucial point was that she kept them at a distance and has continued to do so.

The representatives of IMG in Queen Anne



Scott's publicity cycle: top, at the 1985 Motor Show; above, at a football match in 1984; a

Street had watched the evolution of Miss Scott with interest and began to press their suit with rather more success than Fleet Street. Her possibilities seemed very large and certainly she came closest to the ideal conceived two years before. At the time, IMG was anxious to continue its expansion in the media and to apply the same techniques in promoting the personalities thrown up by television as it had in the sporting world. They had learnt that this sort of promotion requires more reflection and that the media name cannot be as insensitively lent to every product and service as the sportsman's. They offered a complete management service which included accountancy, legal advice,

investment advice, contract negotiation and the introduction of commercial opportunities.

IMG is very adept at presenting itself as the management company. However, it does not always succeed with its clients and has occasionally urged them to take disastrous career moves. On some occasions IMG has failed to provide the business opportunities that it has promised and on others its financial advice has proved catastrophic. (A number of IMG celebrities lost money in the crash of a Lloyds Insurance syndicate.) There is also something about the group's zealous marketing methods which seems to debase the very personality that it seeks to promote. There is about



garden festival in 1985; for Scott Free and The Clothes Show in 1986—and earlier this year

the place an atmosphere, presumably deriving from the character of Mr McCormack himself, of rigorous materialism and pragmatism.

At first, Selina Scott resisted their advances but eventually they made an arrangement with her which is most unusual. While her affairs are handled in much the same way as Sebastian Cole's or Michael Parkinson's, she has never signed a contract with the company. It seems a small point but it is important because it indicates a firmness of mind in Selina Scott and the realistic acknowledgment that she will not become a creature of the company; if anyone is going to package and promote Miss Scott, it will be Miss Scott herself, and it will

not be some besotted personality merchant.

She does, however, use IMG to very good effect in two areas: contract negotiation and the management of her publicity. The company is well practised in both. They have concluded some very big deals for their clients, including a £1 million contract between Michael Parkinson and Rupert Murdoch's television network in Australia. The company, incidentally, takes anything between 25 and 30 per cent from their clients' earnings. Selina Scott dislikes talking about money and was happy to hand over the business of her fee from the American network CBS to the IMG representative in New York, Chuck Bennett. It was reported to be another

£1 million deal but this has since been denied by CBS as a wild exaggeration.

So I was not looking forward to the interview. Besides these protracted negotiations over the conditions of our talk, I had been warned that she is impossible: demanding, suspicious and likely to claim for herself a reserved domain as broadly defined as General de Gaulle's. While waiting, I had worked through a pile of generally ridiculous cuttings which were all in some way or another the result of journalistic frustration. When we met I was struck by how much more beautiful she is off the screen than on. She is much more mobile and more humorous and did not seem impossible.

She had just arrived from New York and admitted to being charged with the excitement of the city. She has not yet had enough exposure on American television to lose her anonymity. From this she deduces, wrongly perhaps, that "Americans are much more used to TV people, they are not so interested or impressed. I can therefore get away with things that I would never normally try here. It is very liberating". The restrictions and privileges of home manifested themselves while she was on the return journey. On the plane an Englishwoman was celebrating her wedding anniversary. "She made me join in as if I'd always been there, as if I was a member of the family."

She is unsentimental about this recognition and is down-to-earth about the supposedly magical intimacy between the regular television performer and the audience. "I do not think it goes nearly so deep as it seems. Don't you think the personality cult has grown out of all proportion to what the so-called personalities actually do? A point comes when you grow tired of it all and people spot that very quickly and then begin to resent it."

Selina Scott has not reached this point yet, although the Press felt that she had last year and announced it with a succession of stories in which her name was generally prefixed by the words "ex-golden girl". She was "exposed" as doing nothing for her salary of £50,000 a year and when a series of her own creation called *Scott Free* was shown, the critics set about her with rare glee. One article summed it up this way: "The rise and fall and imminent crash of Selina Scott isn't an easy graph to follow. If it were, her fellow ambitious women could use Miss Scott's fading career as a blueprint for all the wrong turnings and dead ends to avoid. *Scott Free*, the disastrous television series the BBC couldn't give away with a paid-up licence, was the thing of straw which finally broke the back of the girl who once carried off everything. The 'in-depth' programmes were as bubbly giggly and shallow as a mountain trickle. They did everything watery but sparkle."

The sheer hostility of articles such as this must have hurt, though Miss Scott says she has long since ceased recognizing herself as the subject. "The point about the series was that it was made for a Sunday afternoon audience. The programmes were never intended for the peak viewing time of Monday evening. And, actually, I received a lot of letters from people in the country who were immensely keen to be enjoyed." It is, incidentally, a common view among well-known television presenters that the countryside is their natural constituency.

Even when the whim of the schedulers and the malice of the critics is taken into account, Selina's nature ramble in Scotland was not a

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success. She must now be pleased about the expectations that are held for her future performance in the American weekly magazine programme *West 57th*, which is aimed at a much younger, more cultivated audience than its sister show *60 Minutes*. "Generally we are trying to attract an age group which does not remember the war. We won't be doing pieces which are linked to the news but rather looking into the background. For example, we would not do a piece about a presidential candidate who has just withdrawn from the race. But a couple of weeks later we might look at the campaign against him in a detailed way."

In American television she enters a world which is much more competitive and more ruthless. The style of television reporting is different, too. It is less discursive: "It's really very different. In the writing of the report I am required to hit the story straight away, which is unlike the way we do it in Britain."

Originally the intention of the executive producer Tom Yellin, who had spotted Scott when he was doing a reporting stint in Britain, was to make her the European correspondent, but she has already been asked to do several American stories. It seems that CBS and Yellin were keen for Scott to base herself in America, since all the editing and writing for the programme must be done in New York; however, she has insisted that she is still based in London.

She believes that Yellin is running a risk by using her. "He has a lot riding on this. If it turns out he's made a hellish mistake, he will not have failed exactly, but he will be on the record as having been not right."

Mark McCormack's man, Chuck Bennett, is a great deal more optimistic. And with good reason. The programme is already being watched by 20 million across America and there is every chance that his client's appeal will begin to equal that of Diane Sawyer, the exquisite and serious blonde on *60 Minutes* who protects her private life as determinedly as Scott.

Yellin is also enthusiastic. "I mean, you don't have to be a genius to see this is one hell of an attractive woman. What we did not know was whether she had the talent and the brains to sit down with prominent people in politics and the arts and to ask them the questions they least wanted to answer. Not many people have that sort of quality and we looked high and low for it here." He hints at a steely quality in Miss Scott: "While she may look friendly, she will get your number if she wants to. We are excited about what her force of character and experience do to a story once she starts talking."

It is a different picture to the one which emerged from Scott's filmed encounters with monks, small animals and large Highlanders in *Scott Free*. Here is a woman who will move easily in New York society, not at all the *ingénue* who misses the country air.

She was the eldest of five children in Yorkshire and grew up feeling a little isolated. It is

almost a cliché that beautiful women regard themselves as extremely awkward-looking children. "You should see my photos. I was a late developer and I now look back on those years and think: they weren't mine. All the girls at my school [The Laurence Jackson School in Guiseborough] were interested in was how high they could wear their ankle socks and how far the skirts could go above the knees."

She is rarely tempted into indiscretion and has a firm grip on what she does and does not wish to talk about. "It is not that I am secretive; in fact, I don't suppose you will ever interview anyone more open. It's not that I have got something to hide or that I am fretful about it. But I have just decided that if that is what the Press make of my professional life—my God, imagine what they would do with my private life. Just imagine."

She is much happier talking about television:



McCormack: Scott refuses to become his creature

its exigencies, its techniques and the effect it has on people in the medium. "You really need to be able to act a little but once you start 'phoneying' around then it's a disaster. Once I was interviewing the then Secretary of State for Scotland, George Younger, on Grampian TV. I was being rather po-faced about the seals being slaughtered. And I asked how he, as a man who had the power to revoke the culling licences, had not done so. Before he answered they were saying wind up, wind up. If I had just asked the question and shut up there would have been no problems."

She regards television with an absorption but espouses a level of detachment. "It is a world of children; terribly creative people with wonderful ideas who never think about anything

except working for one programme day and night. They get so wound up in it all that their marriages often suffer. I think my attitude is very healthy... I keep my distance."

She genuinely dislikes looking at herself and says that she rarely recorded her appearance on breakfast television. "I can't stand it. Usually it concerns my hair rather than the clothes I am wearing. Sometimes I looked like a demented lion. My hair might have had too much mousse in it or too much lacquer. Sometimes I felt I looked like a pudding or a doll."

Scott plans to remain living in Britain, although it seems unlikely that she will be at home much. For the moment, her time is consumed with filming and the presentation of *The Clothes Show*, a stream of fashion consciousness which is her remaining link with the BBC. She herself turns out to be rather passionate about design and fashion and, as a girl, designed and made some of her clothes. She does not have much time to shop and so goes to designers who make the clothes to fit her. "That is the crucial thing. If I get a jacket which looks too big it drowns me. You see, I have long arms and long legs. I am not all that easy to design for."

She thinks that fashion has become more important to the British, which is a measure of optimism. "Did you read that piece in the paper the other day about all the media men going up to the television festival in Edinburgh and what they were wearing? All that casual gear. They being really catty about each other's clothes." She does not lack humour and rather enjoys the idea of the fat-headed media peacocks parading around the television festival.

It is difficult to reconcile her interest in fashion and her distinct sense of her own style ("a classic look with an original twist") with what is an artlessness and implied lack of vanity. On the one hand she despises her television image and reacts to the video recorder rather in the way some people recoil when they catch sight of their unprepared image in the reflection of a shop window. She genuinely does not seem to take pleasure from her television image. Yet she is also a woman who takes infinite care to seek out the designer who is able to dress her precisely as she wants and to give her the range to convey her different moods. It may be that there is no real contradiction here and that she is simply somebody who is mindful of her presentation, not because she takes any great pleasure in it but because it is part of her rarefied and individual job.

It is tempting to find too many paradoxes in Selina Scott and to create from what is fairly average raw material a person of monstrous and unreal complexity. She is, after all, a newsreader and a journalist with a very attractive voice, who looks good and, sometimes, beautiful.

Of course, celebrity can distort a personality. The unthinking affection of the masses and the widely distributed hostility of the Press must have an effect because they are so much more extreme than anything an ordinary, unfêted, uncriticized, and untelevised member of the population experiences. But the indications are that Selina Scott has not been spoilt in the same way as, say, the actress Joan Collins. She seems to have no great self-esteem and while talking to journalists frequently mocks herself for being too pompous or too earnest although at the time she may be making a point which is neither. She wishes to emphasize that she does

not take herself too seriously and she wants the interviewer to know that underneath there is someone who is carefree and humorous.

Her relations with the Press are agonized and complex. Much has been made up about her, but setting aside the desperate work of Fleet Street's dissemblers she is astounded that so few of the "quality" reporters come anywhere near describing what she is like. When she reads the result of the interviews she despairs at their complete lack of perception. Where on earth, she asks, has she gone wrong? She turned up to the interview on time, she was polite, she answered the questions as directly as she could, she tried to strike up a reasonable relationship with the journalist, she posed for pictures and demured only when she was asked about her personal life. She cannot understand why her co-operation always results in wilful inaccuracy, presumption and crassness.

If Miss Scott is fierce about anything, it is the way her coverage of the last six-and-a-half years presents her. She returns again and again to the subject and, indeed, complained about a part of this article in which a cutting, referring to *Scott Free*, is quoted, but in no way given credence. She talks as if newspapers were trying to impose some new personality onto her and that the gradual accumulation of untruths in newspaper libraries is creating a grotesque *doppelgänger*. "I wish people wouldn't read them. But every time someone comes along and they mention a previous story, I think, 'Oh my goodness, they have read the cuttings. They are going to have all sorts of prejudices which aren't true'."

She says she is completely happy for people to reach conclusions about her as long as she recognizes them as being true. "I mean, I do not mind if someone says I am a bitch or whatever, but it must be true. I just don't recognize the person they are talking about." She seems to want someone to fix her personality in print and to hold it up to the world with an announcement that this is, without doubt, the definitive account of Selina Scott's life.

It is asking a great deal of any writer, let alone a newspaper reporter, to go beyond a list of descriptions, many of which she herself supplies, and to intuit all that is most hidden and true about her. One has only to listen to people talking about each other to realize how often individuals are misjudged and misquoted.

But one or two conclusions can be drawn. She is a determined woman who uses opportunities but does not create them. She is reflective and dislikes the idea of becoming absorbed by the medium in which she works. Alongside her status as a celebrity, she nurtures a notion of herself as someone who is more at home in the country. Nonetheless, she has all the self-consciousness that is associated with television and the care she gives to her presentation is an indication of this. Above all, Selina Scott is very independent. She has successfully kept her distance from CBS who wanted her to move to America, from the Press who wanted to know the last details of her private life, from the BBC and, lastly, from the International Management Group with which she is shortly to cut all her associations.

There is only one question that remains: "Is this all right, Miss Scott?" ○

Charity at its glittering best: Fashion Aid at the Royal Albert Hall with Scott, flanked by Robin Cousins, left, and Christopher Villiers



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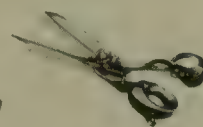
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THE MAURICE MEN

A Room with a View shot film-makers James Ivory and Ismail Merchant to international stardom. But will *Maurice*, their latest film, achieve the same success?
By James Dreyfus. Photograph by Snowdon

NOTHING MORE remarkable has happened in the film business over the last few years than the sudden emergence of James Ivory, American director, and Ismail Merchant, Indian producer, as an international success. They are neither young, trendy nor in any way innovative film makers. Instead this unlikely partnership has for the last 20 years steadily produced elegant and literary films that attract the same sort of audience that attends the ballet and visits the Grosvenor House Antiques Fair: a sophisticated section of British society emerges from a Merchant Ivory film displaying the obvious effects of having attended an enriching and tasteful event.

These films, made independently and financed in a most haphazard and idiosyncratic manner, appeared regularly throughout the 60s and 70s and did just enough business to allow Merchant Ivory productions to go through the whole corner-cutting exercise again. They were invariably received with respect and high seriousness by the British critics, most of whom Merchant and Ivory know well, and with interest by a minority of filmmakers who do not like cinematic car chases and prefer sexual relations to be discreetly intimated. They were not, however, money spinners and were considered in Hollywood to be absurdly uncommercial.

Then James and Ismail made *A Room with a View*, adapted by Ruth Praver Jhabvala, their regular writer, from the novel by E. M. Forster. The film ran and ran in Britain where, oddly, it was perceived as an entirely native achievement. It won Oscars and British Film Academy Awards and it was praised in the most extravagant terms. Well over 20 years after they had started out together in India as a small, amateurish outfit, the pair had arrived. It was as surprising and as improbable as a small firm of interior decorators going public.

Nobody knows quite why it happened. For they had been making films like *A Room with a View* for years. They were nicely shot, well acted and well rounded stories with a beginning, a middle and an end. Perhaps it was because their understated style—a most important part of Merchant Ivory productions—contrasted with the special effects of

Lucas and Spielberg, the dinning thump of *Rambo* and *Rocky*, and the persistent assault on the senses by Hollywood's lesser alumni. Here, at last, was a film that was gentle, picturesque and unlikely to offend mother, up from the country on her quinquennial visit to the cinema.

This will not be the case with their new film *Maurice* (pronounced, let no one forget, in the normal British manner). Although Merchant Ivory's potential audience has at least trebled, *Maurice* will almost certainly be deemed unsuitable for maternal consumption. This, their second adaptation of a Forster novel, is about a young man at the beginning of the century who gingerly admits to himself that he is homosexual. Some regard this film as another example of the couple's bold independence of spirit: a film that is again visually attractive and charming which also addresses the misery of Maurice's position. Indeed it has already won three prizes at the Venice Film Festival and a further one from the British Film Institute. Others, however, wonder whether this is not a very poor film made from a very poor book and regard *Maurice* as little more than a gay version of *Adrian Mole*, and a lot less funny.

It would be very surprising indeed if *Maurice* did as well at the box office as *A Room with a View*, and already there are signs of discreet opposition to a pair of homosexual filmmakers daring to touch a subject so obviously close to their own sentiments. This may in part be a reaction against homosexuality, but there is also a feeling that this film is as Edwardian as Merchant and Ivory, hopelessly in its rare moments of passion; a precious drawing-room drama containing the dialogue E. M. Forster imagined he might have used had he ever dared to speak.

In short, the knives are being sharpened, as almost invariably happens when two generally unregarded members of the film industry get above themselves. But Ivory and Merchant, surrounded by a close and loyal group of admirers, seem oblivious. The compliments for *A Room with a View* are still coming in, the

Partnership of opposites: introspective James Ivory, left, and flamboyant Ismail Merchant



critics are mostly tamed and the public is quietly receptive. They now believe that there is a market for their style whatever the content of the film.

Who on earth are these people who have glided so skilfully into the film reference books? James Ivory was born in Berkeley, California, in 1928. His father was on the management side of the timber business, a Catholic of Irish stock. His mother was from a Louisiana family of mixed French and English ancestry. Their shy little boy was taught at a parochial school and admonished by the nuns not to go and see *Gone with the Wind* because of Rhett Butler's profanity. He disobeyed, and the film held him spellbound. When he reached high school in a small Oregon town to which the family moved, Bette Davis movies became his favourite. Aged about 14, he decided he was going to have a career in the cinema.

Ivory studied architecture and then fine arts at Oregon University, enrolled in a graduate film programme at the University of California and then made his first film, *Venice: Theme and Variations*, as an MA thesis, with the help of \$15,000 from his father. It was a painter's view of an ancient civilization in decay. Before he could finish it, he was called up in the Korean War draft and spent two easy years in the US Army's Special Services, not in Korea but in West Germany. Later he finished the film, and acquired a nice little notice in the *New York Times*.

His second film, *The Sword and the Flute*, completely altered his life. It was a concise history of the two principal strands of Indian miniature painting, narrated by Saeed Jaffrey, an Indian actor Ivory had discovered in Greenwich Village. It was a success, and Ivory was awarded \$20,000 by New York's Asia Society to shoot two films in India, a country he immediately fell in love with.

Returning to New York, he met Ismail Merchant, who was on his way to Cannes where his short film *The Creation of Woman* was in competition. Merchant was amazed to find an American so enthused about India. He agreed to help Ivory finance a project and in May, 1961, the two founded an Indo-American production company to make movies in India aimed at the international market. Thus

Shakespeare Wallah, one of their most affectionately remembered films, came to be made after the partial success of their first, *The Householder*. Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, the Polish writer who had married an Indian and lived in Delhi, did the screenplay for both. When Merchant first called her, she pretended to be someone else. She is even shyer than James.

The friendship between Ivory and Merchant was one of complete opposites. The young Ivory was cool with strangers, introspective and likely to nurture the tiniest slight into a sizeable grudge. Although he has a fairly high estimate of his own abilities, even he would admit that he does not possess the characteristics necessary to survive as an independent film producer. Merchant on the other hand was and is a cheerful and extrovert chancer who has clearly never suffered the smallest doubt, and seems to believe that he has a personal fund of luck which will always see him through.

He was born on Christmas Day, 1936, into a family of traders and business people. His Muslim ancestors had been carpet dealers from Persia and his father was President of the Bombay branch of the Muslim League. Merchant is gifted with charm and a rare persuasiveness. As a young man he once memorized a long religious speech full of political references to Partition and delivered it to acclaim to a huge crowd of Sunni Muslims.

During his time at St Xavier's College, Bombay, Merchant befriended an Indian film actress called Nimmi and decided to enter showbusiness. Although he did scrape through his degree course, he spent most of his time mounting variety shows, acting in college productions and making plans to go to the United States to produce movies that blended the talents of Indian and Hollywood actors. He also furiously cultivated the stars and technicians of the Indian film industry and sometimes managed to persuade well-known actors to take part in his variety shows.

In New York he pursued a remorseless and shameless course of "making things happen". He was a messenger at the United Nations, and posed as a diplomat so that he could impress his friends by entertaining them in the delegates' lounge. Soon he set off for Los Angeles with *The Creation of Woman*, a 16-minute film

about Indian dancing, under his arm, and a sheaf of press cuttings, generated by himself about himself; he hoped that a press release, which preceded him, announcing the arrival of a Mogul producer, would help.

It did not. He found a job instead at a clothing store in Westwood and also in the classified department of the *LA Times*. In his spare time he made as many contacts as he could, actually planning a film with Agnes Moorehead and another with Susan Hayward. He usually wore a jodhpur suit, and got treated perfectly seriously. Soon *The Creation of Woman* was nominated for an Academy Award and Merchant announced in the Press that he was returning to India to make a film called *Destiny of Life* with Moorehead. His route took him via Cannes and New York.

By this time, however, Merchant's showmanship was tempered not only by his meeting with the more obviously cultured Ivory but through seeing, and appreciating, Satyajit Ray's Apu trilogy, and the films of the post-war greats like de Sica, Fellini, Bergman and Visconti. It seemed to him a natural course to produce for his friend the kind of quality films in which Hollywood was not interested. To get the money, however, he copied Hollywood techniques ruthlessly. It was Ivory's good fortune that he found himself involved with a man who would never take no for an answer, even when absolutely no one said yes. But for Merchant, Ivory would have almost certainly have given up years ago. He is a great sweeper up of Ivory's bruised psyche.

It was always a partnership fraught with difficulty, strapped for cash but involving the continued patience of the posse of talented friends Merchant and Ivory gathered around them. Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, for instance, more of a novelist than a film enthusiast, was pressed into service as a screenwriter. She had emigrated to England in 1939, the last of a Jewish family to escape from Nazi Germany. She married 12 years later and left England for Delhi with her Indian husband, an architect. She was, and is, the reverse of a showbusiness writer, being reclusive, shy and persuaded to continue her work in films only through an admiration for Ivory and the constant persuasion of Merchant.

The Nawab's banquet in Merchant Ivory's Heat and Dust (1983); based on Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's prize-winning novel contrasting the India



Nothing irks her more, in this year of tributes to the pair, to be referred to as their script-writer. She did not, in fact, have anything to do with *Maurice*, feeling that the subject was not for her and that she had anyway more pressing work to do of her own. There is no doubt, however, that Merchant Ivory Productions owes almost as much to her as it does to either Ivory or Merchant.

But it is the relationship between these two that absorbs the actors who work for them. It is undoubtedly a great friendship, and without being snide, one can say that it bears all the marks of a successful marriage. It endures because of its curious isolation and the fact that although the two men share precisely the same tastes they have no common characteristics. In short, they complement each other. "There is no question," said one actor, "that they are deeply attached. Ismail respects James's intellect and artistic integrity while James needs Ismail's outgoing qualities, although he seems to see him as a hopelessly superficial playboy."

People who have been part of Merchant and Ivory's circle but who have for one reason or another have fallen out with them often speak of the claustrophobic atmosphere generated by their relationship. "You see," said the actor, "they regard the films as their children, the fruit of their relationship, as it were. They also think of the people who work for them regularly as a sort of extended family and they get myopic infatuations for people which are extremely unhealthy." The relationship relies entirely on Merchant's chutzpah, his liquid charm and zest for social life. It is he who cajoles and engages the world while Ivory remains withdrawn from the messy business of commerce. It is, therefore, Merchant that has to be convinced about a project rather than Ivory or even Jhabvala, because if he is not enthused there is little hope of the necessary money being raised.

There are legions of stories about Merchant's brushes with disaster, about casts being paid late, about mutiny in the crew and the miraculous intervention of improbable investors. Many times during the production of a film Merchant has been forced to ring around a wide circle of wealthy acquaintances in order to ensure its completion. He is prepared to bam-

boozle a potential backer over years, returning again and again with the outlines of his films until he wears down his target.

It has to be said that no one, however esteemed by Hollywood, goes into a Merchant Ivory project for the money, even now after the success of *A Room with a View*. They sign the contract because on the whole it is fun working with the pair and usually worthwhile artistically. Merchant is very fond of pointing to these advantages and in doing so implies that actors who ask for money are being churlish and unprofessional. The actors largely accept this but some find it hard to swallow Merchant's frequent pleas of personal poverty. Over the last year he has tested his most loyal friends by insisting that he has made only £5,000 from *A Room with a View*. True, the profits from the films have never been large, but James and Ismail lead a life which does not fit this image of poverty. James Ivory, for instance, runs a flat in Manhattan, owns a log cabin in Oregon and a large house in upstate New York. Ismail Merchant has bought a flat in Orchard Court in Central London which is shared by Ivory when he is in Europe. They do not live extravagantly but they do create an environment of fastidious good taste, of *objets d'art* and expensive carpets.

Oddly it is the rather less secure ambience on Merchant Ivory sets that seems to bind things together rather than cause them to collapse. The cast and crew are nearly convinced that they are participating in something pure and special; and often people visiting the film set note that the entire production staff have absented themselves from the realities of the world.

The sense of unease sometimes shows through and is compounded by Ivory's shadowy method of direction. Julian Sands, who took the lead role in *A Room with a View*, likened Ivory's behaviour to an ornithologist, somebody who is prepared to sit and watch without interfering. He does not give actors help, but rather hopes that a performance will emerge from the actor's or actress's personality. His relations with actresses are often thought bloodless and basically uncomprehending. Sands, who has now left the Ivory Merchant stable to work in New York, was originally approached for the title role in *Maurice*. After a careful reading of the book he rejected it. "I said that unless there were changes in the character I could not accommodate my character and I could not play the part. I then saw the script and found it to be a completely faithful rendering of what is a very bad and precious book, so I did the professional thing and told them that I would not do it."

Clearly there has been a rift between Sands and Merchant Ivory. At a recent press conference in America, Sands was attacked by Ivory. "It was very strange. He was asked about finding a substitute for me in *Maurice* and he replied that I had fled from all my responsibilities: my wife, my baby, my home and my agent. It was ridiculous and I am seeing my lawyers about it."

Sands is harsh about their motives for filming *Maurice*: "I think they got hold of a paperback of *Maurice*. On the back of it were some remarks to the effect that *Maurice* ennobled homosexual love. I suppose in one way they are ennobling their own relationship. It is an act of extraordinary vanity and I did not see why I should be part of it."

Merchant and Ivory have made other enemies over the last 20 years of trying their luck and other people's patience. This hostility is expressed in the attacks on their films. This one is from a European critic: "The films are like wallpapers, seamless perhaps and well put up, but fundamentally uncinematic and without passion. They have got as far as they have because the British mistrust real cinema and like theatrical and literary approximation. Henry James and E. M. Forster are perfect material for this type of hollow elegance. It looks so like a real culture, not that nasty new-fangled thing called a movie."

"As for the Indian films, how easy it is to sell all that picturesque stuff to the post-imperial British, and then to talk significantly about a meeting or clash of cultures. If you like Hawks and Ford and Eisenstein and Bresson, you have to consider the Merchant Ivory crowd as unfailingly second-rate."

This is hardly the view of the British critics who have given even botched works like *The Guru*, *Savages*, *The Wild Party*, *Hullabaloo over Georgie and Bonnie's Pictures* the benefit of the doubt, and acclaimed the better pictures as masterpieces. Both Merchant and Ivory clearly inspire great affection, and not only from the gay critics nearest to their sensibilities. Somehow, they are quite indomitable, doing their own thing through thick and thin, and collecting around them their sort of people to accomplish it. It is by no means a camp caravan that travels India, Britain and the United States with them, but it does have a sense of its own exclusivity. Less than admiring interviewers can get exceedingly tetchy replies from a slyly humorous Ivory, and are induced into fealty by Merchant.

Some enemies like Raquel Welch eventually come round to them. She gave them so many problems while shooting *The Wild Party* (about a disintegrating silent star trying to achieve a comeback in the sound era) that Ivory had to be persuaded onto the set each morning. Yet when the film was savagely recut by its American distributors, she jumped to its defence, claiming it as the best picture she had ever made. It was the first and last time they engaged a Hollywood star at his or her prime, but it ended well.

Now, after the success of *A Room with a View*, a good many Hollywood stars would give a lot to appear in an Ivory film, and several Hollywood studios, who have spent years ignoring Merchant, have made them fabulous offers. Dino de Laurentiis has pleaded with Ivory to make a film with him for the sort of fee which would generally be near the average budget of a whole Merchant Ivory production.

But none of these offers has even been contemplated. One thing that must be said is that success has not spoilt either James Ivory or Ismail Merchant. They will continue to do exactly what they want when they want. They will not have big budgets, nor big stars. Nor are they likely to have audiences that can be counted in millions. There is not an outfit quite so unique or quite so well liked by its admirers. Those who criticize them for what they are not, or simply because they have at last made money, should do them the honour of at least a little bow. It has been an extraordinary odyssey over almost two decades and it has worked with less capital and more goodwill than most ○

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AN ILLUSION OF VIOLENCE

In the second part of his survey into the way Britain has changed, Laurie Taylor asks whether society is really as violent as we all believe.
Photographs by Brendan Beirne, Sally Soames and Norman Lomax

TODAY, as I write, the tabloid round-up of yesterday's violence is much as always:

BLIND MAN BEATEN TO DEATH
"Police were last night hunting a brutal killer who battered a half-blind elderly man to death in his house."

FAR SEWN BACK
"Surgeons yesterday sewed back a 25-year-old man's ear after it was bitten off by a thug in an underpass in Chelmsford, Essex."

TODDLER'S TERROR
"A screaming toddler watched in horror as his father was repeatedly stabbed . . . in a row over parking."

Violence of this sort is readily taken as an index of our degree of civilization. If people can behave so terribly towards each other, then surely we face an alarming moral crisis? But is Britain becoming more violent? At one level there can be no argument. Never before have we been so surrounded by violent images and ideas. Violence sells newspapers, books, videos and television programmes: it sells insurance and locks and security systems.

This creates problems. To ask about the reality of violence in Britain in the face of this onslaught of representations is not unlike setting out to discover the social structure of America from repeated viewings of *Dallas* and *Dynasty*.

When we learn from a recent survey, for example, that half the female population of Islington, in north London, now choose not to go out at night, are we to conclude that our cities have become more violent places than before or that more of us have become inclined

Police stand guard over an inner-city riot victim in Birmingham. "One day he is kindly Mr Plod; the next he may be in flameproof overalls, visor and shield. . ."

to believe everything we hear about them?

The fear of violence in Islington and elsewhere is certainly real enough. James Munro, who is involved in a victim support scheme in south-east London, has to fight his way through layers of the emotion before he can explain his work to solitary elderly women. "It doesn't matter that nothing's ever happened to them. It's enough they've read about it in the local paper; if they've read that someone local has been knocked over and had their handbag snatched." He knows that talking to them will provide some relief, but before he can do that, he has to get inside the flat.

"I say, 'Look, if you don't believe who I am I'll push my identity card under the door for you to look at'. Then there's silence for a moment. I wait quietly and then say, 'Had a good look?' If there's still no reply I say very gently, 'Come over to the door. That's right. And now look through your peephole at me. I may look a bit younger on the photo but you can still see it's me, can't you?'"

It's all a far cry from James Munro's previous job as a transport manager, but he's delighted to have such voluntary work to fill up the hours of his retirement—even if so many of them have to be spent outside closed doors. "Some of them still won't open the door—one or two have even kept the card—so I then say, 'Look, if you still don't believe me, ring the local police station and read out the number of my card to them. And then come back to the door.'"

Some criminologists appear almost irritated by news of such extreme anxiety about violence. Yes, of course it is true that there are twice as many crimes of violence as there were 10 years ago, but violent crime still accounts for only 5 per cent of all offences and serious violence rises very little. There are also signs that violence is increasing at a slower rate than other crimes and the Metropolitan Police have just reported an actual decrease of 5 per cent in Violence Against the Person during the first six

months of 1987. But the most reassuring news of all for the frightened elderly women, for the one-third of all women over 60 in Britain who feel "very unsafe" after dark, is that their own personal chance of being a victim is almost nil. Only 1 per cent of all women over 60 will be subject to any form of street crime. And yet 37 per cent worry about the prospect (see Table). The real problem here, insist such hard-nosed criminologists, is not crime but fear of crime (a fear which may reduce the number of people who go out at night in our cities, and thus, ironically, make the streets more dangerous for those brave enough to venture forth).

But this is an odd argument; a cold statistical piece of reasoning. What surely matters at least as much as the probability of being the victim of an assault is the possible effect of such an attack. Young men between 16 and 20 may be able to shrug off a minor assault (even in some cases carrying their scars like medals) but it can have a devastating impact upon those already

quietly brought about a revolution in the way we think about crime. No longer is all our attention focused on the offender: his disturbed family background, his emotional immaturity, his subculture. Instead, it is the victims' feelings and reactions that are being given priority.

So dramatic has been the turnaround that Helen Reeves, the director of the National Association of Victim Support Schemes, can still sometimes sound quite incredulous about it. "Twelve years ago no one ever spoke about crime having a deep emotional effect. Now it's part of the accepted wisdom. People now know they have the right to feel depressed. Before, they felt they were going mad. We had to reassure them, to say that being a victim was not unlike having a nasty illness, or your child having a serious accident. It's so accepted now that recently it was even on *The Archers*."

But what was her view on the reality of violence? Did her many years' work with victims make her feel that the popular papers had got it right—that the statistical rise in violent offences meant Britain was becoming a violent society? "I really don't know. I do think that there are new crimes around. There is more chance of violence during a burglary today and more people are likely to carry knives. And then there are the attacks on totally innocent people in the streets. Old people."

Nothing alarms us so much as the idea of violence being directed against the "totally innocent"—the type of violence which is the subject of so much tabloid reporting: "Two grinning thugs mugged a polio victim as she sat helpless in her wheelchair."

It may not be pleasant to see drunken teenagers brawling on the streets or the football terraces but there is some mild comfort in knowing that they are only hurting the other—and even more comfort in the statistical news that many of these who end up as victims in such encounters have been the aggressors in previous altercations. Gratuitous violence is different. Anyone can be the victim. Even people who are minding their own business or only trying to do their job. In 1986, attacks on British Rail staff were up by 16 per cent; one out of every 200 Health Service workers has been attacked seriously enough to need medical treatment; last year there were 87 recorded assaults on teachers in Merseyside. Our cities now appear to contain "no-go areas" where fear of assault keeps out milkmen, postmen, rent collectors, maintenance workers and even emergency services.

This surely looks like evidence that a new form of violence is abroad, a self-defeating, wanton violence which lacks all regard for age and authority, a mindless anarchy bred from the alienation of inner-city life.

Les Newcomb agrees. Les is not what one might call a pacifist man—he's been in and out of professional crime for most of his life—but he insists that his violence was quite different from that which he now sees all around him on

the streets of south London. "They call it crime. But it's not proper crime. It's what I call 'easy meat' crime. Always looking for the soft targets." Why was it so different now? "It's because they're desperate. We could get a good living out of crime. But these kids can't even do that. So they're forced into desperate crime. Have a go at anything." And was the violence sometimes gratuitous? "Most of them don't do it because they like it. Only nutters do that. They do it because they're all edgy. They're more willing to use a tool [a weapon]. And they're frightened other people have got a tool. They get touchy and over excited. They lash out. It's diabolical really."

But is this sort of violence really so new? Recent research shows that throughout the last 150 years we have been periodically sounding



A third of women over 60 feel "very

unsafe" after dark, yet only one in 100 will be subject to any form of street crime. Criminologists say the problem isn't crime but the fear of it

off about the "new" violence on the streets, about those very features—wantonness, gratuitousness—which are upsetting us so much in the late 80s. In his splendid book, *Hooligan: The History of Respectable Fears*, Professor Geoffrey Pearson shows that street violence is not all that different from the way it used to be. The past was not filled with amiable rogues and lovable pickpockets. Those we now describe as "yobboes" or "members of the new underclass" show a striking resemblance in their behaviour to "the lawless tribes of 'street arabs' of the 1840s; the ungentlemanly profligates of the 1860s; the degenerated 'un-English' hooligan of the 1890s; the Hollywood-inspired motor-bandits and bag-snatchers of the 1930s [and] the 'new... violence' shown by the 'Americanized' Teds."

The Hungerford massacre undoubtedly gave the "new violence" argument a powerful push. But there is no evidence from the rest of the murder statistics to suggest a trend towards such random killing, that there are more Michael Ryans waiting in the wings. Even though there are now twice as many murders in England and Wales as there were in 1961, the total is still less than 700 a year and, unlike other violent crime, there are sudden falls as well as rises. (In London, for example, 1982 was something of a high point with a total of 193; this fell to 149 in 1983 and in 1985 moved back up to 187.)

And if you want to know what the typical murderer looks like, then the quickest way, as criminologist Jack Young points out, is to glance in the mirror. You are more likely to kill

yourself than anyone else (in 1985 there were 4,998 recorded suicides) and if you leave yourself alone then those in the biggest danger are your relatives (50 per cent of all murders) and your friends (30 per cent). You are not very likely to use a gun (1 per cent compared to the 35 per cent who use "a sharp instrument") and it is still a rarity for anyone in this country to be killed by a complete stranger.

It was not, however, merely the randomness or the scale of the Hungerford massacre which so aroused concern, but also its rural location. Could such things really be happening in an English country town? This surely was a new phenomenon. There was no need to delve back into history for the answer: 1987 provided plenty of examples of other dramatic shatterings of the rural calm.

Percentage likely to be victims of 'street crime'



Source: The British Crime Survey (1983), London, H.M.S.O.

rendered insecure by age, illness, isolation, or poverty. James Munro knows elderly women whose personality has been changed by a single incident—women like Helen, who was tough-minded enough to try to fight off her two aggressors. "She went for them with her walking stick. Fearless. But they took it off her and hit her with it." She was not seriously hurt, but after that single act of bravery she became a very frightened woman. Elderly people may at best have only enough resources to be courageous once.

We would know precious little about how women like Helen coped with violence if it were not for James Munro and the 7,000 other volunteers who work in the 305 Victim Support Schemes which now cover two-thirds of the population of this country. These schemes have

THE ROLE OF THE POLICE

The Victoria Inn at Stroud in Gloucestershire had a rather noisier night than usual on July 24 this year. A woman who was drinking in the bar became involved in an altercation with a plainclothes policeman. She resolved the argument by spitting in his face and running

(June 9), Mansfield (May 25), Bracknell (May 17), Murton, Co Durham (May 8), Bournemouth (April 19), Oxford (April 11), Gloucester (January 1) and Lincoln (January 1).

These "white disturbances" received considerably less publicity than the "black riot" after the Notting Hill Carnival, even though, in terms of numbers involved and damage caused, they were often at least as subversive of law and order. They shared one other element with Notting Hill and many other major disturbances of recent times: they involved pitched battles with the police. From one point of view this is hardly surprising. If large numbers of

those who warned that if the police went too far down this road—if they became too obsessed with the technology of confrontation—that they might never be able to reassume their traditional role.

Professor Terence Morris of the London School of Economics believes the modern policeman has already been made schizoid by such conflicting demands. "One day he is the kindly Mr Plod seeing the children over the road, befriending old ladies and lost foreigners; the next he may be in flameproof overalls, with a visor and shield, wielding his truncheon before a howling mob." Sometimes members of the "mob" being faced by this truncheon-wielding "new policeman" will be howling with pain rather than aggression.

Reports of police action against the hippie peace-convoy at Stonehenge in 1985, and during the News International demonstration at Wapping in January, 1987, both emphasize the one-sided nature of the violence. In a report on Wapping published in August, the Haldane Society, after referring to an initial show of violence from a small number of people who threw missiles and overturned a lorry... goes on to talk of "squads of riot police, backed by mounted officers, charging indiscriminately into a penned-in crowd, striking out with truncheons and causing many injuries, especially to the head... The irresistible suspicion is that the police commanders who planned the strategy on January 24, 1987 saw it as a military operation against an enemy, not as a public order exercise in which the civil right to assemble peacefully had to be balanced against the need to deal with violence."

It is a long way from the ideological battle on the streets of Wapping to the drunken brawling outside the Victoria Inn. But the readiness of large numbers of people to come out on the streets to fight the police in Stroud and Bournemouth and Shrewsbury—and to fight them with sticks and stones and CS canisters—may be part of the price that the police will have to pay for their new anonymous public-order role, for their increased commitment to "breaking heads rather than feeling collars".

We do not, as Geoffrey Pearson also reminds us, need to feel too anxious yet about the safety of individual officers. However tough life becomes, they can feel pretty secure compared to some of their forebears. In the 1890s one quarter of London's policemen were assaulted each year in the course of their duties.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

What makes it so difficult to say whether we are more or less violent now than 50 years ago, is that our ideas of what should or should not count as "violent" keep changing. A street fight, which we now find profoundly disturbing, might, 50 years ago, have been more or less



NORMAN LOMAX/IMPACT

Police struggle with pickets outside *News International*. "A military exercise against an enemy"?

away. Two police officers gave chase and caught her but an angry crowd quickly gathered, assaulted the police and released the woman. When police reinforcements arrived they found that they were facing more than 100 youths arranged in organized ranks. In the subsequent brawl shop windows were smashed, four police were injured, six people arrested, a patrol car was wrecked, and a group tried to set fire to the Victoria Inn. Inspector Ken Price of Stroud police was shocked: "The mob were throwing stones and bottles. We had to call in men from all over the county."

Stroud was not the only neighbourhood to have its normal tranquillity disturbed. Similar near-riot scenes were reported during 1987 in Ilford (September 3), Newquay (August 30), Great Yarmouth (August 30), Shrewsbury

people create a disturbance then large numbers of police are likely to arrive to restore order. But the frequency of such battles is seen by some as evidence that the inner-city police tactic of meeting violence with more violence has led to a state in which the police force can now be regarded as an alien force—an army—rather than as a community resource dedicated to the control of crime.

The police, of course, claim that they have been pushed into their new aggressive posture by events. The inner-city riots in Brixton and Toxteth (1981), and Handsworth, St Pauls and Broadwater Farm (1985) are all invoked to support the argument that paramilitary tactics were needed to combat such escalating violence. But in the heated political atmosphere surrounding these riots there was little room for

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ignored. Matters become even more complicated when we move away from public life. What, for example, are we to make of all the new concern about domestic violence? Do all the books and treatises on the subject, the new refuges and places of safety for "battered women" mean that men have suddenly taken to beating their spouses, or that, prompted by the women's movement, we have at last become civilized enough to admit to ourselves that such behaviour is as much "violence" as any other form of assault?

It certainly cannot be excluded on the grounds that it is somehow less violent. Domestic violence accounts for one-tenth of all unlawful killings in the country and in London one woman a month is beaten to death by her lover or partner. Those who are not killed will have to face everything from slaps and kicks, to black eyes, to broken bones, and sadistic mutilation. Ann Parker, now a volunteer in south-east London helping such women, remembers the treatment meted out by her former partner—a successful writer: "I'd think everything was all right. He seemed quite calm. And then, suddenly, he'd explode. Like a pressure cooker. And rush at me, kicking. He always kicked me. On the shins. Over and over again so that I had to wear coloured stockings when I went out to cover up the bruises."

Other men take it more slowly. The writer, Elizabeth Wilson, describes one man "who tied his wife to a chair in the kitchen, made her watch while he boiled water on the stove—telling her meanwhile what he was going to do with it—and then pouring the boiling water over her."

And if domestic violence cannot be excluded from other violence on the grounds of severity, neither can it be omitted because of its rarity. In London last year 28,000 calls were made complaining about such violence. When that is set against the traditional indifference of the police to such matters, it is not too difficult to believe survey results which suggest the true figure may be at least four times higher.

Domestic violence is also *repeated* violence. Muggers do not typically go out looking for the same victim every Friday and Saturday night, but many wives can expect to be assaulted with just such regularity. And the longer a violent marriage lasts the more severe the violence becomes. In one study of over 100 battered women, more than half endured a violent attack twice a week, and for a quarter of these it lasted nearly an hour.

In common with other women, Ann Parker had to endure such violence without screaming for help. "There was my son. He didn't have his own room at the time. I couldn't bear to wake

him up, to wake him up and have him screaming through the bars of his cot, 'Don't hit mummy! Don't hit mummy!'. And when she was not protecting the child's psyche she was protecting the neighbours' sensibilities. "The Irish family next door—their son had a bedroom next to mine. And the father told me off about it as though I was the person who was doing it. 'I don't want my son to hear that', he said."

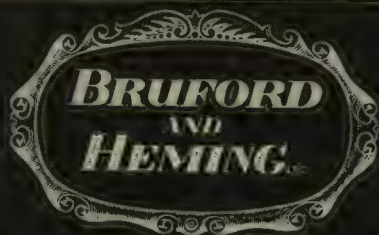
She did, finally, encounter some sympathy for her predicament. "I took my son to the doctor—he had bronchitis—and I couldn't put any sentences together. Couldn't speak. I'd become so frightened. He pushed my son aside and said, 'Now what's wrong with you?' It was so obvious. I said something—not much about it. And quick as a flash he went, 'What did you do to provoke it?' The shutters came straight down again. I didn't say another word."

It was only the existence of a "refuge" in her area which finally allowed Ann to escape not only the violence but also the implication that she was somehow to blame. "Now I talk to people on the 'phone who are like I was. I had one this morning. 'Can you tell me on behalf of a friend'—it's often a friend—if being punched in the face is violence?'"

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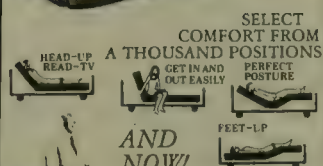
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acknowledged that domestic violence was *real* violence. Perhaps aware of the tiny number of cases which they pursue in a single year—in 1986 it was just 400—the police were henceforth instructed to treat a woman assaulted in her own home as they would treat “any crime between strangers”. And as with such “normal crimes” they are expected to go ahead with arrest and prosecution even if the victim is reluctant to press charges. It is a change in procedure which may well be forgotten in a couple of years’ time when newspaper headlines dramatically announce: “Shock Increase in Wife Battering”.

RACIAL VIOLENCE

To many victims of domestic violence the family home is a prison. When Imram Hahn was 13 years old it became a vital hiding place. “I’d gone out one day to buy some bread. Six white youths stopped me and encircled me. One of them trod in some dog muck and wiped his foot all over my clothes. Then they took me to a car park and made me stand in the middle and used me as a punching bag. Beat me up until I was bleeding and covered in cuts and bruises. Up till then I’d been an open person, a fighter really, but that took all the fight out of me. I stayed in the house. I was literally afraid to go out. Straight to school and back. No social life. It led to great arguments with my mother and sisters, because as a boy I was expected to do traditional outside things. My mother taunted me, ‘Why don’t you have long hair and wear bangles like your sisters do?’ That attack took five years out of my life.”

Ten years ago, when that assault happened, Imram would have found it difficult to persuade the police to regard it as anything other than a nasty piece of bullying: there was considerable official resistance to the notion of a new and virulent form of assault in the cities of Britain—racial violence. Despite the Paki-bashing of the 1970s in which 150 people were seriously assaulted in London’s East End in three months, despite a further wave of assaults and

murders in 1976, it was not until 1981 that a Home Office report accepted that “racially motivated attacks... are more common than we had supposed; and there are indications that they may be on the increase”.

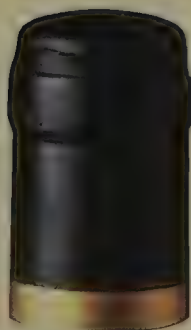
By 1983 a poll conducted for London Weekend Television had found that one in four Asians in the east London boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Redbridge, Waltham and Newham said they or a member of their family had been attacked on racial grounds; one in 10 of them severely. Could matters be worse in 1987?

Imram, now liberated from home and working behind a desk for the Newham Monitoring Project, doubts if we can really know. “We had 225 cases of racial harassment last year. By September this year we’d had 350. I am now dealing with 70 or 80 cases myself. Each one is a priority. But we are probably unearthing what has been there all the time. Nobody can say that it has increased.”

It is not only the East End of London which produces such frightening figures. In the north London boroughs of Camden, Barnet, Brent and Harrow, police statistics show 129 cases of racial assault in the first six months of 1987. This form of violence is also particularly savage—often a long way from a typical “mugging” in which the victim may physically suffer little more than a severe push or shove. A dossier recently compiled by the Runnymede Trust includes numerous cases of killings, arson attacks on homes, shops and restaurants, violent assaults on young children, and many gang attacks in which knives, guns and bottles have been used.

Who is mainly responsible? Imram does not like the tendency to blame it on “yobboes or unemployed youth or National Front supporters”. That makes the violence sound too abnormal. It is much more rooted in the general culture. “Many very young kids are fed racial prejudice by their parents: they start off with verbal abuse and then as they get older move on to the physical. The parents support them. We are not dealing with people who will grow out of it, but with young people who are now growing into it.”

But were the National Front not still active in the area? “We’ve scared them away.” “Right away?” “Well, they have pockets



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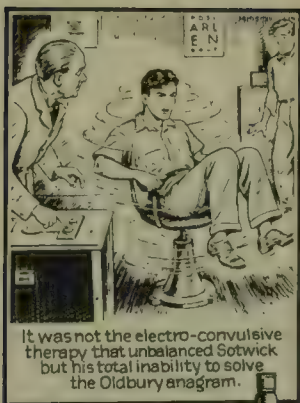
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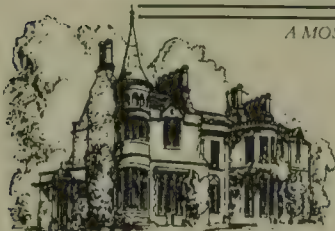
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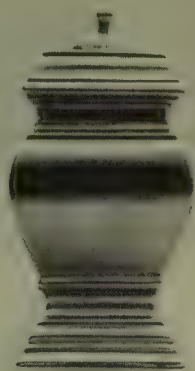
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in Canning Town. And they're working now in East Ham. Cross over Barking Road and you find a large, mainly white, population. There's severe harassment there."

Scaring off the National Front was also once a natural part of life for Nigel in Chapelton. "Every Saturday we'd go into Leeds town centre. A real vigilante group. Fighting people who'd called our mothers 'nigger'. Anyone who had a skinhead or a Mohican was regarded as NF. Big fights. A lot of people stabbed and taken to hospital." Nigel doesn't go into town on Saturday any more. Perhaps it's not compatible with his present job in a solicitor's office or with his ambition to become the first Rastafarian solicitor—but perhaps also because he considers that battle-lines are less clear. "Because we fought them a lot we got to know them and got to know they were like us—just doing it for kicks. They got to respect you in the end. I could walk down the street and I'd meet a guy who a month before I'd beaten up—and he'd go, 'All right?' and I'd go, 'All right?' to him—and we'd just pass. They're not really fascist. Not deep down. Just big kids."

Was it the greater readiness of Afro-Caribbeans like Nigel to fight back which made them less likely victims of racial attacks than Asians? Imram, who had himself backed away from battle for those seven long years, was anxious to insist that this was no longer the situation.

"White racists believe the old myth of Asians being weaker so they attack them more, and so more get hurt, and the myth is reinforced." They will not, he says, find matters half so easy in the future.

SUMMARY

The proper question is probably not "How violent is Britain today?", but "How violent would we like it to be?". By ignoring domestic and racial violence, by discouraging women from reporting rapes, we can keep the incidence of violent crime at a modest level, just as we can raise it alarmingly by deciding that we will rigorously pursue such assaults.

We don't hear too much about

domestic or racial violence in the Press—perhaps because it immediately raises serious questions about the family, marriage, equality between the sexes, racial prejudice, and the behaviour of our police. It's so much simpler to stick to street violence, to the vandal, the hooligan, the mindless mugger. Everyone feels able to pronounce on the depravity of these offenders.

And whereas few have ever been so simple-minded as to suggest that domestic or racial violence was caused by watching too much television, such bald explanations are readily put forward to explain street violence. (Nobody appears all that deterred by awkward facts: e.g. the low level of violence in Japan despite the violent character of much of its television output; the statistics which show that the level of violence on television has been decreasing while the level of street violence has been rising; the historical evidence that the music-hall, the cinema and rock-and-roll music were once singled out in the same manner as television is now.)

Street violence is undoubtedly a cause for concern, especially for those residents in deprived inner-city areas who have to endure one third of all the robberies and thefts from persons. There is a danger, though, in letting it stand for all violence. This not only neglects other, and often more serious, violence (violence which might be an even better index to the state of our society) but ignores areas, such as industrial relations, where, despite the occasional Grunwick and Wapping, violence has dramatically decreased.

But street violence looks likely to go on dominating the debate. Politicians, editors and programme makers know that no other subject attracts so much attention, no other topic provides a better opportunity for moralizing about the degenerate state of the country, and for advocating pat solutions and panaceas. There may be a cost in all this for those of us on the receiving end. For, in the words of the Dutch writer Nancy Friday: "Not only are we victims of the actual threats around us, but we are victims of those people who manipulate us into being fearful so they can 'save' us."

Additional research: Chloë Sayer.
Next month: Laurie Taylor,
professor of sociology at York
University, discusses work

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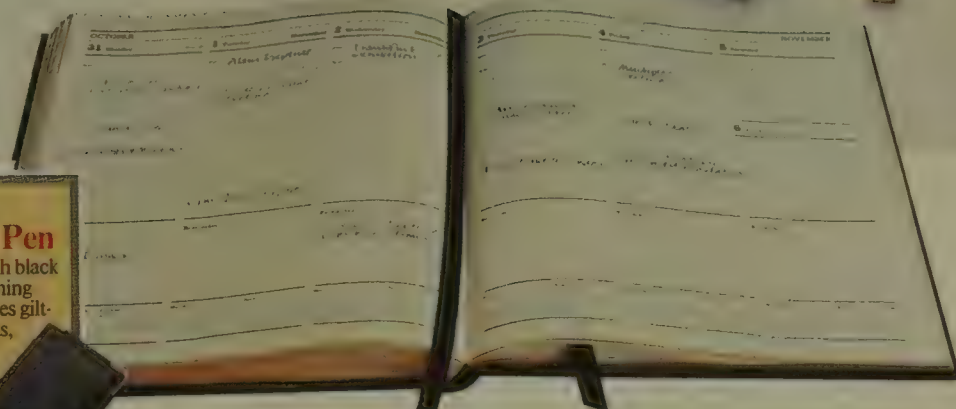
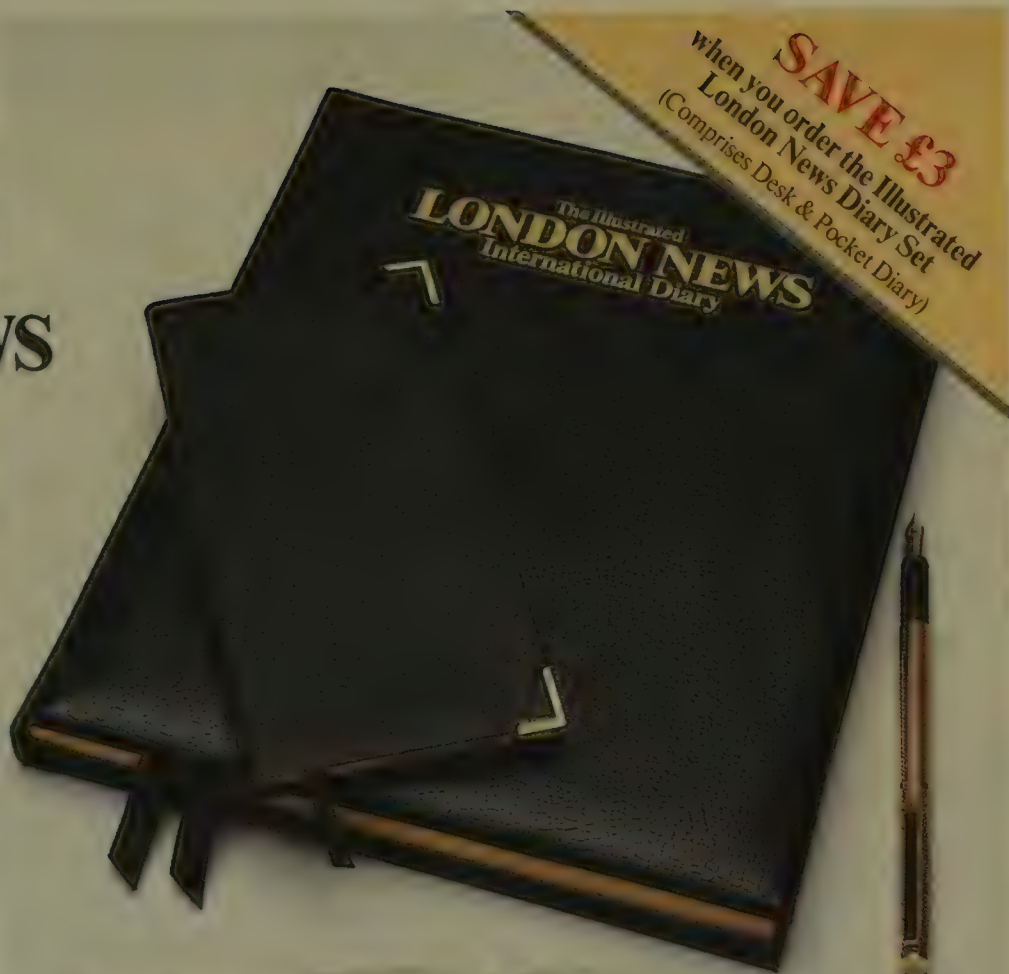
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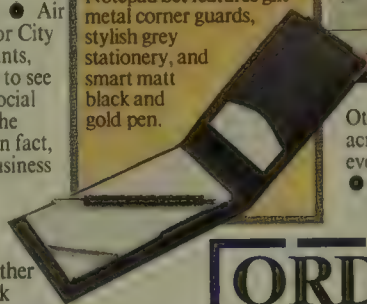
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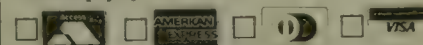
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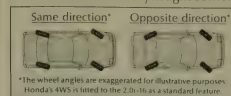
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REVIEWS

Jeffrey Archer's first play raises doubts; Edwardian elegance from the Merchant Ivory team suffers in the script; and comedian Steve Martin has the last laugh



Andrew Cruickshank as the Old Bailey judge in *Beyond Reasonable Doubt*. His presence substantiates a weak production

THEATRE

Archer misses the mark

THOUGH I have met a variety of criminal-court plays over the years, I cannot remember one in which a famous knighted advocate and chairman of the Bar Council is in the dock for the murder of his wife and conducts his own case less startlingly than his reputation might suggest. That is the opening situation in Jeffrey Archer's *Beyond Reasonable Doubt* at the Queen's, a piece that will probably send veteran supporters of Royal Court drama—quite another kind of court—into paroxysms of anguish.

We are in the Old Bailey for a single act only, the first. The verdict, for or against Sir David Metcalfe, arrives after nearly three hours. It is less glum a wait than it

might have been because the author is firmly involved in telling a story. Whatever else we can say about Mr Archer as a dramatist, he does keep a story in sight. His methods of expanding it may be artificial and his characterization dangerously from stock, but we do want to know the ultimate answer. In court we have two conflicting tales of Lady Metcalfe's death in her Wimbledon home. During the rest of the play, which is almost entirely a flash-back, we are allowed to judge for ourselves which tale is the likelier. The movement of the plot is sustained even though the story is not one that develops naturally.

The Crown prosecutor at the trial is a personage so relishingly

against the prisoner (accused of administering a lethal dose of a drug) that we are hardly surprised to learn during Act II that they were rivals at Oxford in matters political and matrimonial. The main witness is the Metcalfes' housekeeper, whose likes and dislikes are amply evident. We hear, too, that the dead woman was gravely ill with cancer, that her substantial fortune has been willed to her husband, and that he had lost a large sum in unlucky speculation.

The first act has to be an expository précis; but then time is needed for the following scenes, the domestic events of months before in which the dramatist has some early fun with the anecdotal small-talk—too anecdotal, perhaps?—of a pair of criminal lawyers and a solicitor. Later we have copious quotations from Dylan Thomas: apposite though these may be, they might baffle some

listeners who do not know *Under Milk Wood* that well.

Mr Archer gets smoothly through his revelation of affairs on the night of Lady Metcalfe's death. Much of the writing skims the surface; but here again a story is being told, the run of events serves during performance, and the acting fortifies the author. Frank Finlay as the confident grammar-school Yorkshireman, Sir David, creates a character that in his treatment is seldom exaggerated; Wendy Craig has a gentle grace as his desperately ill wife; and Jeffry Wickham exercises with pleasure the malice of the prosecuting counsel who failed (those were the days) to be president of the Oxford Union. Thoroughly apt work by Antonia Pemberton (housekeeper), Andrew Cruickshank (judge), and David Langton (solicitor) helps to substantiate David Gilmore's production ○

—J. C. TREWIN

Forster filmed again

E. M. FORSTER wrote *Maurice* in 1914, shortly after *Howard's End*, but it remained unpublished until 1971, a year after he died at the age of 91. Forster was homosexual in an age when to be so was a criminal offence. The liberalizing of the law came too late to affect him, and his book, describing a fictitious relationship (at the time of writing Forster was an unfulfilled homosexual) remained out of public view lest it should embarrass his family.

The decision not to publish until after his death was probably correct. From a fiction writer of sparse but dazzling output—*Howard's End*, *A Passage to India* and *A Room with a View* being among the best English novels of the 20th century—*Maurice*, with its strait-jacketed restraint, reads like the work of a man desperate to exorcise a part of his psyche.

The partnership of producer Ismail Merchant and director James Ivory, whose version of *A Room with a View* was one of last year's most successful British films, have returned to Forster, and have made a film that handles the subject matter with appropriate discretion and sensitivity.

It is a window on Edwardian England, a comfortable land with the poor in their place, where the middle classes still dressed for dinner and were cosseted by squads of servants. Maurice, impeccably played by James Wilby, discovers homosexuality at Cambridge and engages in an affair with Clive, a wealthy aesthete, but is sent down on a thin pretext for the sake of college honour. Their liaison extends beyond Cambridge as Maurice becomes a stockbroker and Clive reads for the Bar.

The downfall of an aristocratic contemporary, caught *in flagrante* with a guardsman, focuses Clive's mind and he marries a pleasant girl (Phoebe Nicholls) who helps him in his ambition to become a politician. In confusion Maurice attempts a cure at the hands of a quack hypnotist (Ben Kingsley) but, tormented by guilt and repressed feelings, is drawn to the under-gamekeeper (Rupert Graves) at Clive's country seat, who is able to requite his longings and finally make him accept his sexuality.

For once Merchant Ivory are without Ruth Praver Jhabvala to write the screenplay; Kit Hesketh-Devereaux, who has co-written with James Ivory, lacks her experience

in the delicate art of filleting a novel. There are moments of acute self-consciousness in his dialogue, especially in the Cambridge scenes, which are redolent with wordiness.

It is perhaps hard for a young audience, attempting to come to terms with AIDS, to appreciate the degree of public opprobrium accorded to homosexuality; but the film excellently represents the dichotomy between the classical Greek ideal of male bonding and stuffy post-Victorian conventionality which believed any condition curable with the application of fresh air and exercise. Ivory musters a fine supporting cast which includes Denholm Elliott, Billie Whitelaw, Simon Callow and Judy Parfitt, and Pierre Lhomme's cinematography evokes a golden Edwardian autumn, an England destined to vanish in the blood of Flanders.

FRED SCHEPISI's *Roxanne* is a consistent delight, a perfect vehicle for the unusual talents of the American comedian Steve Martin, who also wrote the screenplay. It is an updated version of Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, set in a mountain town in the Pacific Northwest. Martin is the local fire chief: wise, kind, romantic, literate, but cursed with a protuberant nose which makes him the butt of half-witted bullies and incapable of wooing a woman. He achieves it by proxy, feeding a dim, handsome colleague (Rick Rossovich) the lines to win the beautiful astronomer Roxanne Kowalski (Daryl Hannah).

A special laboratory was commissioned to make a plaster impression of Martin's nose and create a genetically accurate bigger version. The comedian's body movements are astonishing; he has the supple fluidity of a Buster Keaton. He fights duels with a tennis racquet, ascends and descends the outsides of buildings in gymnastic somersaults and trips easily and gracefully along the street as though he were Gene Kelly. He has a smooth, round face, blue eyes and prematurely silver hair, which all add to a slightly disturbing presence, an essential requirement for a screen clown. He is the subtlest and most accomplished of contemporary American comedians and at last a film has done him justice ○

—GEORGE PERRY

A profile of Ismail Merchant and James Ivory is on page 68.



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LONDON

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Good reads for November

NON FICTION

A LIFE OF DEBT AND SCANDAL

The Profligate Duke

by Mary Soames
Collins, £17.50

THERE ARE stronger words than profligate to describe the fifth Duke of Marlborough, who did nothing to enhance the reputation of the title he inherited and did quite a lot to harm it. Mary Soames seeks to be fair to her ancestor and has worked hard to find some of the finer qualities of the man, and even some modest and worthy achievements, but the real George Spencer Churchill keeps breaking through and wrecking it all, just as he did when he was alive, first as the Marquess of Blandford (the courtesy title he bore from birth in 1766) and later, from 1817 until 1840, as the Duke of Marlborough.

He was evidently a tiresome child, constantly in scrapes of one kind or another, and his parents seem soon to have given up on him, transferring their approval and ambitions to their second son and, on his early death, to their third. Lord Blandford, according to a contemporary, had many good and amiable qualities, but "was by far the most extravagant man I ever remember to have seen". The Duke and Duchess, gravely disturbed by their son's financial recklessness, kept him on a tight rein. He resorted to money-lenders and spent the rest of his life hopelessly in debt.

He also got married. His choice seemed quite suitable—Lady Susan Stewart, third of 16 children of the Earl of Galloway, a sweet and sensible girl who painted in watercolour—but the haste with which the marriage was arranged, without reference to them, angered his parents, who did not attend the ceremony. They would have been even more irate had they known the real reason for their son's haste, which was that he had fallen in love with a young married woman, Lady Mary Anne Sturt, and presumably hoped that by marrying poor Susan he would forget about Mary Anne, who was



The Inexpressible Air of Dignity, a contemporary caricature of George Spencer Churchill by James Gillray

already the wife of a close friend.

If this was his plan it failed. The affair was resumed and, on discovery, Blandford was sued for criminal conversation (the contemporary expression for adultery) by Charles Sturt, who claimed £20,000 in damages. After a sensational case the jury found for the plaintiff but awarded only £100, presumably because it had come out in court that Sturt had for some years been living secretly with Madame Krumpholtz, a celebrated harpist.

Blandford emerged from the case, as his biographer observes, "a patently ludicrous and scandalous figure, exposed to the ridicule and censure of the world at large". His behaviour when he succeeded to the dukedom did nothing to improve the world's opinion of him. Lacking the financial resources to maintain Blenheim properly, he resorted to a variety of dubious measures to

obtain money. A service of gold plate, the gift of the Elector of Bavaria to John, first Duke of Marlborough, was disposed of. The Duke had intended to replace the service with ormolu facsimiles, which he hoped would escape detection, but before this was done he was taken to court by the Marlborough trustees, who had noticed the disappearance and demanded the return of the family heirlooms. They were too late—the plate had been melted down into three ingots and sold.

Susan, though near the end of her tether, moved to Blenheim with the Duke. She had stayed with him, borne six children, and seemed prepared to do her best to make a fresh start. After two years she moved out. No doubt she was as appalled as everyone by her husband's behaviour and by the shabby reputation he had acquired among his contemporaries. Mrs. Arbuthnot, for example, who

visited Blenheim with the Duke of Wellington, noted in her journal that the Marlborough family had "gone sadly to decay" and that the present Duke "is overloaded with debt" and "very little better than a common swindler". But the main cause of the Duchess's departure was not the Duke's poor public reputation, which she had lived with for many years, but the fact that he had acquired a new mistress, Matilda Glover—a local girl, young enough to be his daughter—set her up in a lodge within the park and given her a child (the first of three). The Duchess retired to London and never returned to Blenheim.

It is a sorry tale and Mary Soames does not disguise its sordid, though she cleverly relieves the catalogue of indulgence and disaster from monotony by threading within her manuscript a number of lyrical accounts of the Duke's achievements as a creative gardener, both at Blenheim (where he was limited by lack of money and by the grand designs of Capability Brown which had already been carried out) and at Whiteknights, the house near Reading which he bought and extravagantly transformed during the earlier years of his life. The house has gone and little of the garden remains (it is now part of Reading University), but the author is able to draw on her own love and knowledge of gardening, and on a contemporary account by Barbara and Thomas Hofland, to describe the undoubted skill and achievements of her profligate hero in this field.

From the warmth of these passages, and of similarly sympathetic accounts of his enthusiasm as a book collector, painter and musician, Mary Soames contrives to add a small measure of attraction to her subject. Even so, on the evidence of this very readable book the judgment of history can be no more favourable to the wretched Duke than was the opinion of his contemporaries, and anyone concerned for the future of the House of Lords must hope that there are not many more skeletons waiting to be uncovered in Britain's aristocratic houses ○

—JAMES BISHOP

Mary Soames charts a rake's progress of indulgence and disaster in a biography of the fifth Duke of Marlborough, and new fiction includes Booker Prize contenders by Murdoch and Ackroyd

RECENT FICTION

REMORSE AND REVOLUTION

The Book and the Brotherhood

by Iris Murdoch

Chatto & Windus, £11.95

Chatterton

by Peter Ackroyd

Hamish Hamilton, £10.95

Trust Me

by John Updike

André Deutsch, £9.95

WHEN WE ask what a novel is about we may have in mind either its plot or its themes. Iris Murdoch's *The Book and the Brotherhood* is a philosopher's novel which is not simply about philosophy. Peter Ackroyd's *Chatterton* is a poet's novel which is certainly about poetry though it is also preoccupied with ambition, forgery and death. In terms of plot there is a great deal going on in both books.

The "brotherhood" of Miss Murdoch's title, a microcosm of Western intellectualism, is a group of friends in their middle years who had known one another at Oxford. They have all been successful, in the Civil or Diplomatic Service, in teaching or journalism, and at the outset of the novel we find them back in Oxford for the Commem Ball. Also at the ball is their contemporary David Crimond, author of "the book". At college Crimond was well to the Left politically and, unlike the others, has stayed that way. Long ago, admiring his gifts though

suspicious of his extremism, his friends had put up the money to enable Crimond to write a major political book.

Will it ever be finished and, if so, might they be appalled by it? The question is inextricably linked to other issues that dominate the lives of Gerard Hernshaw, Duncan Cambus, Jenkin Riderhood and Rose Cartland. The unscrupulous womanizer Crimond twice steals Duncan's wife Jean. The shattered Duncan is consoled by Gerard's niece Tamar whose impoverished and embittered mother Violet has forced her to give up her studies at Oxford. Tamar becomes pregnant and secretly has an abortion.

In the heady Murdoch mix of high tragedy and low farce there is a place here for sheer melodrama. Tricked by Crimond into a duel which he believes to have only a ritual significance, Duncan thinks of the symbolism of Greek tragedy. He then finds that he has accidentally shot and killed the intruding Riderhood. There are orgies of agony and ecstasy in scenes between Duncan and Tamar and between Crimond and Jean, and bizarre variations of Russian roulette resulting from Crimond's suicidal despair.

The cosmic scale on which these extraordinary events are projected is such that it is a relief to come down to earth and at last confront "the book". Gerard is stunned by the brilliance of Crimond's synthesis of all philosophies and his unorthodox Marxist view of the inevitable human global revolution. He doesn't agree with it all

but perhaps, with Rose's help, he will write an answer to it. With Riderhood (whom he had loved) dead, and Duncan and Jean now living abroad, Gerard has other reasons for clinging to Rose. As the old patterns change, he experiences acutely his kinship with, and dependence on, the only other survivor.

For all Iris Murdoch's lively engagement with the issues of morals and politics and the inadequacy of Western intellectuals when confronted by the book of history, it is this revelation of a middle-aged man's isolation and inescapable remorse that is the most satisfying thing in her book.

In his new novel, Peter Ackroyd's tragic hero is the poet Thomas Chatterton (1752-70) whose original poems using medieval forms were fakes in the sense that he attributed them to an imaginary 15th-century Bristol poet, Thomas Rowley. Ackroyd's hero has another name, that of Charles Wychwood, who is also struggling for recognition as a poet while his wife Vivien works in a London art gallery to support him. Charles suffers from hallucinations and severe pains in the head and is clearly going to die young. He is obsessed with the mystery of Chatterton's early death and his theory of imitation and forgery, and his own death with one arm dangling to the floor from a hospital bed is itself a ghoulish imitation of Henry Wallis's celebrated 1856 painting, *The Death of Chatterton*.

Charles goes to Bristol in search

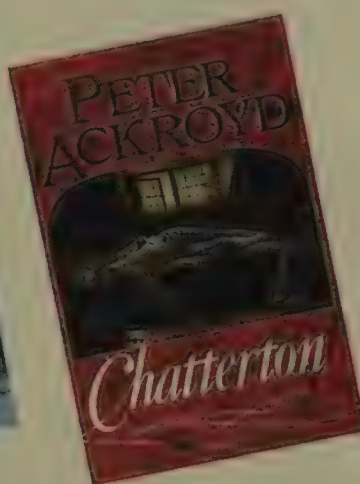
of Chatterton papers and develops the theory that the poet's presumed suicide in a London garret was faked and that after it, with the encouragement of a Bristol bookseller called Joynson, he "forged" poems by the great poets of his day just as he had created his own imitations of medieval poets.

Ackroyd is playing here with a theme of contemporary interest. Can a forgery be as good as the real thing? Is not all art based on imitation? As he unfolds his mystery, the narrative moves in and out of time with such bewildering rapidity that time itself is virtually abolished.

Though *Chatterton* often seems like an ingenious act of literary juggling it is also an exuberant satire on human folly. An alternative to the accepted version of Chatterton's death by suicide, which shows him writhing in agony after accidentally taking an overdose of arsenic (treatment for the clap) makes a memorable set piece.

In the minefield of affluent American middle-class family life, as John Updike sees it, trust is the booby trap most likely to blow up in your face. Typical Updike couples, either separated or divorced, see the price of their misjudgments in the crumbling edifice of their bourgeois comforts. One of the best stories in *Trust Me*, his new collection, is "Killing", in which a woman is left by her estranged husband and her sisters with the responsibility (and consequent sense of guilt) of agreeing with the hospital that her father should be allowed to die. Elsewhere the path to consolation is shown to be a tortuous one. After his divorce, golf frees the narrator of "Deaths of Distant Friends" from "the entire offended social order". His golfing partner dies but his death, and that of an elderly acquaintance and a dog, bring him happiness of a kind: "Witnesses to my disgrace are being removed." Updike discerns the sadness and dismay of these victims of domestic turmoil but, in portraying them, is inclined to settle into a groove of severe analytical commentary ○

—IAN STEWART



The capital list

A discerning guide to events in the city



Love nose no bounds for Steve Martin in the comedy romance *Roxanne*. African textiles, centre, among worldwide fashions and fabrics at

THEATRE

ILN ratings

★ ★ ★ Highly recommended

★ Well worth seeing

Where applicable, a special telephone number is given for credit card bookings. The address & telephone number of each theatre are given only on the first occasion it appears in each section.

... And Then There Were None Agatha Christie's thriller with Jack Hedley, Rodney Bewes, Miriam Karlin, John Fraser, Glynn Barber & Geoffrey Davies. Duke of York's, St Martin's Lane, WC2 (836 5122, cc 836 9837).

Beyond Reasonable Doubt In Jeffrey Archer's courtroom drama Frank Finlay plays the Chairman of the Bar Council accused of murdering his wife. Queens, Shaftesbury Ave, W1 (734 1161, cc). REVIEW ON P.8.

The Big Knife Carefully cut, this play by Clifford Odets might be a serviceable, if artificial, melodrama. It is a strenuous attack on the Hollywood morals of nearly 40 years ago, muffled by woolly verbiage. Martin Shaw copes vainly with the nervous tensions of the protagonist, an actor baffled & black-

mailed. Albery, St Martin's Lane, WC2 (836 3878), cc 379 6565).

Blues in the Night American singer Carol Woods leads a programme of blues & jazz music from the 1930s. Piccadilly, Denham St, W1 (240 8230, cc 379 6565).

Entertaining Strangers David Edgar's expansive community play about the clash of wills between a 19th-century Dorchester brewery proprietress (Judi Dench) & an evangelical parson (Tim Pigott-Smith). Audiences are expected to move around with the action. Cottesloe, National Theatre, South Bank, SE1 (928 2252, cc).

Fathers & Sons Turgenev's novel of mid-19th-century Russia in a richly truthful version by Brian Friel & with imaginative performances by Alec McCowen, Richard Pasco & most affectingly, Robin Bailey. Lyttelton, National Theatre.

Follies Tremendous line-up of stars for this musical. Sondheim fans will love the music—others might be disappointed by the feeble storyline. Shaftesbury, Shaftesbury Ave, W1 (739 5399, cc 379 4444). REVIEWED SEPT. 187.

Girlfriends New musical by Howard Goddard, set on a Second World War bomb-command base. Hazel O'Connor plays

a WAAF. Playhouse, Northumberland Ave, SW1 (839 4401, cc 240 7200).

★ Groucho: A Life in Review

The story of the Marx brothers, particularly Groucho, directed by his son Arthur who has written a witty allusive script with Robert Firth. It is notable especially for the exact portrait of Groucho by Frank Ferrante, who is only 24, & for the playing of piano & harp by Les Marsden. Comedy, Panton St, SW1 (930 2578, cc).

Lettice & Lovage Maggie Smith & Margaret Tyzack lead the cast in Peter Shaffer's drama about the relationship between two formidable women. Opens Oct 27. Globe, Shaftesbury Ave, W1 (437 3662, cc 741 9999).

A Lie of the Mind A distinguished cast, including Paul McGann, Miranda Richardson & Geraldine McEwan, try to get on in Sam Shepard's new play about a woman who goes mad. Apollo, Shaftesbury Ave, W1 (437 2663, cc 434 3598).

Ting Tang Mine Nick Darby's play about Cornish mining villages, set after the Napoleonic Wars, is a muddle & not helped by messy direction. The cast, which includes such artists as Robert Glenister & (in a preposterous part) Barbara Jefford, is fighting against fate. Cottesloe, National Theatre.

★ View From the Bridge Alan Ayckbourn has made an

uncommonly good job of directing Arthur Miller's near-classic. He is especially fortunate in Michael Gambon as the Brooklyn longshoreman. From Nov 3. Aldwych, WC2 (638 6404, cc).

★ A Midsummer Night's Dream Bill Alexander's modern-dress production is short on the poetry but offers some cheerful skinning.

David Haig in Bottom. Barbican, EC2 (638 8891, 628 8795, cc).

★ Serious Money Carole Churchill's brilliant comedy of City business framed, surprisingly, in rhyme. Not to be missed. Wyndham's, Charing Cross Rd, WC2 (836 3028, cc 379 6565).

Thursday's Ladies Dorothy Tutin, Eileen Atkins & Siân Phillips are excellent as three middle-aged women reliving childhood memories. The play has an ominously slow beginning but does develop. Apollo, Shaftesbury Ave, W1 (437 2663, cc 434 3598).

★ The Living Room Bryan Forbes directs this revival of Graham Greene's play, with Paul Daneman, Dulcie Gray & Katherine Schlesinger. Oct 23-Nov 21. Royalty, Portugal St, WC2 (831 0660, cc).

★ A Man For All Seasons Charlton Heston plays Sir Thomas

bearded by James Woods, a self-confessed hitman, who helps him to nail a crooked tycoon. John Flynn's film, scripted by Larry Cohen, breezes through familiar territory with an engaging freshness. Opens Nov 27. Leicester Square Theatre, WC2 (930 5252, cc 839 1799).

Beyond Theatre (15) A large cast, including Tom Conti & Gladys Jackson as New York theatre rats, struggle to little effect in Robert Altman's film mocking the world of fashionable American psychiatry.

★ House of Games (15) American playwright David Mamet directs his first film, starring his wife Lindsay Crouse as a best-selling psychiatrist drawn to the low-life world of a gambling con man, played by Joe Mantegna. A dark, psychological thriller, which is neatly worked out. Opens Nov 20. Cannons, Haymarket, SW1 (839 1527), Tottenham Court Rd, W1 (636 6148), Chelsea, 279 King's Rd, SW3 (352 596, cc). Let's Hope It's a Girl (15) Liv Ullmann, Philippe Noiret, Bernard

Not to be missed... the film *Roxanne*, opening on November 6 and Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers* at the Coliseum. Stay clear of... Hinge and Bracket's *The Importance of Being Earnest* at the Whitehall Theatre and the film *Aria*



the Commonwealth Institute. Sparkling queen of the "gladdies", outrageous Dame Edna is Back With a Vengeance on the Strand

waiting for Godot John Allderton plays Samuel Beckett's two tramps. Opens Nov 25. Lyttelton, National Theatre.

★ Down Cemetery Road Alan Bennett & Patrick Garland take audiences on a journey through the writings of Philip Larkin. Nov 19-21. Cottesloe, National Theatre, South Bank, SE1 (928 2252, cc).

★ J.J. Farr Albert Finney & Bob Peck in a new play by Ronald Harwood about a burnt-out Catholic priest, released after being held hostage. Opens Nov 18. Phoenix, Charing Cross Rd, WC2 (836 2294, cc).

★ Othello Joseph Marcell of the Royal Shakespeare Company directs. Thomas Baptiste plays Othello. Nov 24-Dec 19. Arts Theatre, 6 Great Newport St, WC2 (836 3334, cc 379 4444).

★ Adult Child/Dead Child Talented comic performer Claire Dowie breaks away from her stand-up routines with a show about growing pains. Until Nov 7. Kings Head, 115 Upper St, N1 (226 1916).

★ Fringe

★ Auteuil are again impressive as the schemers who caused the death of Jean in the first part, & are joined by Emmanuelle Béart as Jean's grown-up daughter. Opens Nov 20. Curzon Mayfair, Curzon St, W1 (499 3737, cc).

★ Maurice (15) Merchant Ivory film, based on E. M. Forster's novel. Opens Nov 6. Cannons, Shaftesbury Ave, WC2 (836 8861, cc). REVIEW ON P.9.

★ Roxanne Updated version of Rostand's tale of

Almost Persuaded Annie Griffin's Edinburgh Festival show hits town. A one-woman mix of performance, comedy & country love songs. Nov 23-Dec 5. ICA, The Mall, SW1 (930 3647).

★ Apart from George Rural despair as unemployment hits a

family. Nov 3-28. Royal Court, Uppertown, Sloane Sq, SW1 (730 2554).

★ A Collier's Friday Night Semi-autobiographical D. H. Lawrence piece, set as ever in Nottinghamshire and centring on a powerful mother/son bond. Until Nov 28. Greenwich Theatre, Crooms Hill, SE10 (858 7755, cc 853 3800).

★ Les Liaisons Dangereuses Ambassadors (836 6111). ★ Me & My Girl, Adelphi (836 7611).

★ Les Misérables, Palace (434 0909). ★ The Mousetrap, St Martin's (836 1443).

★ The Phantom of the Opera, Her Majesty's (839 2244). ★ Run For Your Wife, Criterion (930 3216). ★ Starlight Express, Apollo Victoria (828 8665).

★ Three Men on a Horse, Vaudeville (836 9987).

★ The Flying Kite Four young Asians face up to tensions and troubles in Southall's "Little India". Nov 9-21. Theatre Royal, Gerry Raffles Sq, E15 (534 0310).

★ Hamletmachine Robert Wilson's theatrical kaleidoscope of light & sound is a meditation on Hamlet & other wide-ranging themes. Nov 4-14. Almeida, Almeida St, N1 (359 4404, cc).

★ The Hypochondriac Molière's comic masterpiece given

renewed vigour by a cast including Tom Courtenay & Brian Glover. Until Nov 21. Lyric Hammersmith, King St, W6 (741 2311, cc).

★ A Lie of the Mind A distinguished cast, including Paul McGann, Miranda Richardson & Geraldine McEwan, try to get on in Sam Shepard's new play about

relationships. Royal Court, Sloane Sq, SW1 (730 1745, cc).

★ Macbeth Fairly straight treatment by Cheek by Jowl. Opens Nov 11. Donmar Warehouse, Earlham St, WC2 (240 8230, cc 379 6565).

★ Romeo & Juliet Accessible revival of David Thacker's modern-dress production. Oct 26-Nov 21. Young Vic, The Cut, SE1 (928 6363, cc 379 4444).

★ Savage in Limbo Another exploration of lowlife America from John Patrick Shanley. Until Nov 7. Gate Theatre Club, 11 Portland Rd, N1 (229 0706).

★ Separation Sparky, spiky romance from Tom Kempinski. Until Nov 14. Hampstead Theatre, Swiss Cottage Centre, NW3 (722 9224).

★ Twelfth Night Kenneth Branagh directs. Nov 26-Jan 16. Riverside Studios, Crisp Rd, W6 (748 3354, cc).

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CINEMA

The following films are expected to be showing in London or on general release at some time during the month. Programmes often change at short notice. Consult a local or daily newspaper for exact location & times.

★ ★ ★ Angel Heart (18)

Alan Parker's tense, vivid thriller about voodoo, with excellent performances by Robert De Niro, Mickey Rourke & Lisa Bonet. REVIEWED OCT. 187.

★ Bellman & True (15) Bernard Hill is a computer systems engineer, fired for alcoholism, who has an intimate knowledge of a bank's alarm system. To force him to assist in its robbery his young stepson is kidnapped by Richard Hope, a smooth gangster. Richard Loncraine, who directed & adapted with Desmond Lowden the latter's novel, maintains both excitement & characterization.

★ Best Seller (18) Brian Dennehy, a Los Angeles police detective & best-selling novelist, is

befriended by James Woods, a self-confessed hitman, who helps him to nail a crooked tycoon. John Flynn's film, scripted by Larry Cohen, breezes through familiar territory with an engaging freshness. Opens Nov 27. Leicester Square Theatre, WC2 (930 5252, cc 839 1799).

Beyond Theatre (15) A large cast, including Tom Conti & Gladys Jackson as New York theatre rats, struggle to little effect in Robert Altman's film mocking the world of fashionable American psychiatry.

★ House of Games (15) American playwright David Mamet directs his first film, starring his wife Lindsay Crouse as a best-selling psychiatrist drawn to the low-life world of a gambling con man, played by Joe Mantegna. A dark, psychological thriller, which is neatly worked out. Opens Nov 20. Cannons, Haymarket, SW1 (839 1527), Tottenham Court Rd, W1 (636 6148), Chelsea, 279 King's Rd, SW3 (352 596, cc).

Let's Hope It's a Girl (15) Liv Ullmann, Philippe Noiret, Bernard

Blier & Catherine Deneuve play relatives inhabiting a decrepit Tuscan farmhouse in this family saga, directed by Mario Monicelli. Opens Nov 13. Chelsea Cinema, 206 King's Rd, SW3 (351 3742, cc); Renoir, Brunswick Sq, W1 (837 8402, cc).

★ Manon des sources (PG) The sequel to Jean de Florette, Marcel Pagnol's pastoral story of duplicity in rural Provence, directed by Claude Berri, sustains the momentum of its predecessor, with a twist of fate worthy of Hardy. Yves Montand & Daniel

Auteuil are again impressive as the schemers who caused the death of Jean in the first part, & are joined by Emmanuelle Béart as Jean's grown-up daughter. Opens Nov 20. Curzon Mayfair, Curzon St, W1 (499 3737, cc).

★ Maurice (15) Merchant Ivory film, based on E. M. Forster's novel. Opens Nov 6. Cannons, Shaftesbury Ave, WC2 (836 8861, cc). REVIEW ON P.9.

★ Roxanne Updated version of Rostand's tale of

Cyrano de Bergerac in which love overcomes a big nose. Steve Martin is in pursuit of Daryl Hannah. Opens Nov 6. Cannons, Chelsea & Shaftesbury Ave. REVIEW ON P.9.

★ The Untouchables (15) Brian De Palma directs an expensive new version of the Eliot Ness story, scripted by David Mamet, in which the Federal Treasury officer takes on the deadly gangster empire of Al Capone in prohibition-era Chicago. Kevin Costner is tight-lipped & cool as Ness & Sean Connery effective as a wise,

old, uncorrupted cop. Robert De Niro's portrayal of the Italian mobster, Sam "The Boss" Brown, is a masterpiece.

★ The Witches of Eastwick (18) Although George Miller has performed something of a feat to get John Spide's novel on screen, the film is uneven. Cher is good as the New England cultist, but Michelle Pfeiffer & Susan Sarandon are as pallid as the rest of the coven assembled by Jack Nicholson, who is magnificent in his diabolical part.



A Roman fish designed using a mosaic/glass technique, among Glass of the Caesars at the British Museum. Rossetti's Proserpine for sale at Christie's

LIST OF THE MONTH

ALL NIGHT LONDON

What does your wide-awake *ILN* reader do after closing time? Here are some suggestions on how to fill up the dead hours.

1 Movies. How about a night—literally all night—at the flicks? The Scala Cinema, 275 Pentonville Rd, N1 (278 8052), is famous among insomniacs for its five-film marathons on Fridays & Saturdays. Usually there is a theme like Sci-fi or Horror.

2 Eats. There is a choice of restaurants open round the clock. The Canton, 1 Newport St, WC2 (437 6220), for 24-hour Chinese, is excellent value from £5 a head. At similar prices the aptly named Up All Night, 325 Fulham Rd (352 1998) serves steaks, burgers & a good chilli.

3 Sport. Help the food go down with a quiet game of snooker. The Centre

Point Snooker Club, Centre Point, Tottenham Court Rd, W1 (240 6886), has reasonable membership fees & welcomes women. Expect to be surrounded by Chinese restaurateurs after 1am.

4 Cash. Cashcard reached its limit? The following 24-hour bureaux de change will cash a sterling cheque for 5 per cent commission: 548 Oxford St, W1; 37 Coventry St, W1; 236 Earls Court Rd, SW5.

5 News. Catch up on tomorrow's headlines: ask nicely down what is left of Fleet St & pick up a free newspaper (we tried—it works).

6 Drink. It is illegal for a pub to serve alcohol after 11pm (although the licensing laws might change soon). Some do, of course, but we can't tell you where they are. If desperate, try a club—the bar at Ronnie Scotts, 47 Frith St, W1 (439 0747), is licensed until 3am.

7 Dance. Bop till you drop at any one

of London's late-night venues. Recommended: The Wag, 35 Wardour St, W1 (437 5534). Trendy but unimposing—open until 4am.

8 Travel. Don't drink & drive: go from A to B in style with Delta Cabs (961 5959). If you pre-book, they will pick you up in a limo but it's not cheap at £12.71 an hour (plus 69p a mile & VAT).

9 Breakfast. Still hungry? Possessed of an iron constitution? Try Harry's, 19 Kingly St, W1 (734 8708), for egg, bacon & fried slice (open 10pm-6am). Basic, but atmospheric: half of clubland seems to end up here. Or, if you still need that drink, some of the pubs around Spitalfields market open at 5.30am (for traders) & serve a good hearty brekky.

10 Bargains. At the end of a hard night out, get your limo to take you to Petticoat Lane before dawn on Sunday morning & you'll find bargains before the tourists even wake up.

OTHER EVENTS

Benson & Hedges Tennis Championship finals, Guildhall, Preston, Nov 21-29.

Daily Mail International Ski Show. Slope off & inspect the latest garments & gadgets for winter sports. Earls Court, SW5. Nov 14-22. Sat, Sun 11am-7pm, Mon-Fri noon-10pm. £4, children £2.50.

Bonfire Night. Guy Fawkes celebrations in London's open spaces including Clapham & Streatham Commons, Brockwell & Kennington Parks at 7.30pm. Further information from London Tourist Board (730 3488).

19th-Century Picture Sale. Major works include Rossetti's *Proserpine* (£400,000-£600,000), the sixth of eight versions, & Leighton's *Sibyl* (£300,000-£500,000). Listed as untraced after it was sold at Christie's in 1897 for £630 the *Sibyl* reappeared recently in the United States. Christie's, 8 King St, SW1. Nov 27, 11am.

BOOKS: THIS MONTH'S BEST SELLERS

HARDBACK NON FICTION

1 (-) **Life Wish: One Woman's Fight Against Breast Cancer** by Jill Ireland. Century, £10.95. A life-enhancing account of a struggle against cancer.

2 (-) **Floyd on France** by Keith Floyd. BBC, £11.95. A very rich meal: safer to read about than eat.

3 (-) **The Neo-Pagans: Friendship and Love in the Rupert Brooke Circle** by Paul Delany. Macmillan, £14.95. Another of those groups of precious Cambridge students.

4 (2) **Grace: The Secret Lives of a Princess** by James Spada. Sidgwick & Jackson, £12.95.

5 (10) **The Life of My Choice** by Wilfrid Thesiger. Collins, £15. A great traveller explains.

6 (-) **Elvis World** by Jan & Michael Stern. Bloomsbury, £16.95.

7 (-) **Chinese Cookery** by Ken Hom. BBC, £8.95.

8 (-) **Destination Lapland: A Journey to the Far North** by Mark Wallington. Hutchinson, £9.95.

9 (1) **Cricket, XXXX Cricket** by Frances Edmonds. Heinemann, £9.95.

10 (-) **Charles Laughton: A Difficult Actor** by Simon Callow. Methuen, £14.95. Major, rounded portrait.

PAPERBACK NON FICTION

1 (2) **Five Hundred Mile Walkies** by Mark Wallington. Arrow, £2.50.

2 (1) **Backcloth** by Dirk Bogarde. Penguin, £3.50. The final volume of the actor's autobiography.

3 (-) **Floyd on France** by Keith Floyd. BBC, £6.95.

4 (3) **All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes** by Maya Angelou. Virago Press, £3.95. Volume five of her absorbing autobiography.

5 (-) **Chinese Cookery** by Ken Hom. BBC, £5.25.

6 (6) **Beyond the Blue Horizon** by Alexander Frater. Penguin, £3.95. Journalist re-creates the leisurely 1930s air journey from London to Brisbane.

7 (-) **Rothmans Football Yearbook** edited by P. Dunk. Queen Anne Press, £10.95.

8 (7) **Conspiracy of Silence: The Secret Life of Anthony Blunt** by Barrie Penrose. Grafton Books, £3.95.

9 (-) **Scandal: An Encyclopaedia** by Colin Wilson & Donald Seaman. Grafton Books, £3.95.

10 (-) **Ultimate Alphabet** by Mike Wilks. Pavilion Books, £5.95. 7,777 objects hidden in 26 paintings. Identifier of the largest number nets £10,000.

HARDBACK FICTION

1 (-) **A Friend from England** by Anita Brookner. Cape, £9.95. Slightly substandard but eminently readable.

2 (1) **Savages** by Shirley Conran. Sidgwick & Jackson, £12.95. How life is lived—allegedly—among the corporation's wives.

3 (5) **The Songlines** by Bruce Chatwin. Cape, £10.95. Travel writer's novel about aboriginal Australia.

4 (-) **The Book and the Brotherhood** by Iris Murdoch. Chatto & Windus, £11.95.

5 (2) **Sepulchre** by James Herbert. Hodder & Stoughton, £10.95.

6 (-) **Chatterton** by Peter Ackroyd. Hamish Hamilton, £10.95. SEE RECENT FICTION P 91.

7 (-) **Misery** by Stephen King. Hodder & Stoughton, £11.95. Horror, claustrophobia and suspense.

8 (3) **Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency** by Douglas Adams. Heinemann, £9.95. *Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* author does it again.

9 (7) **Rage** by Wilbur Smith. Heinemann, £11.95. The battle rages round apartheid. Fierce & readable.

10 (-) **Riches** by Una-Mary Parker. Headline, £10.95. Luscious gush about the spoilt rich. SEE PAGE 52.

PAPERBACK FICTION

1 (2) **A Matter of Honour** by Jeffrey Archer. Coronet, £2.95.

2 (1) **Hollywood Husbands** by Jackie Collins. Pan Books, £3.50.

3 (-) **Wanderlust** by Danielle Steel. Sphere, £3.50.

4 (-) **A Misalliance** by Anita Brookner. Grafton Books, £2.75.

5 (-) **Adventures of Goodnight and Loving** by Leslie Thomas. Penguin, £3.95. An alarming & touching novel.

6 (3) **Act of Will** by Barbara Taylor Bradford. Grafton Books, £3.95. An intricate story following three generations through 50 years.

7 (5) **Guardians of the West** by David Eddings. Corgi, £2.95.

8 (-) **The Bachman Books** by Stephen King. New English Library, £4.95. Four novels originally published under King's pseudonym, Richard Bachman.

9 (-) **Staring at the Sun** by Julian Barnes. Picador, £3.50. Wise & compelling.

10 (-) **Augustus** by Allan Massie. Sceptre, £3.95. A nice piece of pastiche.

Brackets show last month's position. Information from Book Trust. Comments by Martyn Goff.

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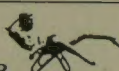
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The cult of the party entertainer

Jane Ellison finds that even politicians are game for a laugh

SOMETHING curious is happening to politicians. They are—insidiously, but nevertheless relentlessly—starting to escape the bounds of Westminster, bent on turning themselves into media superstars. Stunts which once only the most publicity-crazed *Cross-roads* actor would contemplate, are now embraced eagerly by the nation's elected representatives. They will do anything to get on television—not to defend their policy on ferret coursing or subsidies for spoon benders but simply as a means of becoming famous. Used skilfully, television can turn the humble backbencher into a celebrity.

Once, politicians got on the television only to talk about an Issue. The Issue was examined soberly and received sensible, if boring, comment. It went along party lines. Thus, Sir Harry Scrope-Boggis would duly turn up at the BBC, receive his statutory coating of face powder and go on, guns blazing, to call vehemently for the restoration of the death penalty for parking offenders. Opposing him, Alf Privvy would speak equally strongly in favour of a public inquiry into parkers' rights and moves to stamp out the brutality of wheelclampers. It was predictable and dull. But at least everyone knew where they stood.

Today things are very different. There are still the trusties—Michael Mates, Anthony Beaumont-Dark, Gerald Kaufman—who can be relied upon to have a strong opinion about anything. They are the old, reliable Dial-a-Quote brigade, famous for showering radio and television companies with lists of their 24-hour telephone numbers. They are guaranteed to generate outrage on a range of subjects from Government secrecy to illegal immigrants. But they have been supplanted by a new breed of politicians on whom the media relies not to have views about anything, but simply to entertain their audience with a ready stream of jokes and amusing anecdotes.

Throughout the party conference season this year, the BBC's *Today* programme relied for humorous comment on its hand-picked team of three jokesters, all elected Members of Parliament. The comedy team consisted of Austin Mitchell, representing Labour, Charles Kennedy of the Alliance, and the ubiquitous Julian Critchley, who is vaguely, if implausibly, Tory. These three assembled regularly in the studio exchanging quips among themselves: "Did the Rolls arrive on time Julian?" "Wasn't it lovely weather in Brighton?" and their role was purely to make jokes about each other's parties. Poli-



tics were quite incidental. Thus Critchley rambled entertainingly about how awful Labour women were compared to the dear, harmless Tory ladies of his own party. "Ho, ho, ho," the others laughed. Mitchell was caustic about Liberals wearing funny hats. (More laughter). Kennedy made some good jokes about the loony Labour fringe. And so they went on, the Three Ronnies of the BBC, with the fawning *Today* man laughing loudly and obsequiously.

Indeed, so established have the Three Ronnies become as entertainers that it was quite a shock to see a lone Ronnie, the telegenic Austin Mitchell, being interviewed on Brighton beach by Channel 4 news in a picturesquely windswept pose. In vain we waited for the jokes. Remarkably he did not tell any but tried to look quite serious; after a minute or so we realized that he was trying to talk sensibly about his leader's speech.

Of course, Mr Critchley's engagements are not confined to the BBC. Turn over the pages of almost any magazine or newspaper and he is bound to crop up, sooner or later. "My favourite restaurant" by Julian Critchley. "A good night out." "My summer holidays." He is a diligent and amusing word-spinner. He can always be relied on to make a joke about his own party. One wonders why he is a politician at all.

Critchley was not the first to become a "media MP". We had already got used to the sight of Clement Freud advertising dog food, telling us how to cook *risotto al funghi*, or

appearing on quiz shows like *Just a Minute*. He has long since given up the attempt of persuading anyone to take him seriously as a politician. But the mania is spreading to other MPs who should know better. First there was Kinnock's famous pop video, where the Welsh Windbag cavorted wildly with Tracey Ullman in a vain attempt to get the kids on his side. Then Mrs Thatcher herself did a stunt for *Yes, Minister*, with Paul Eddington and Nigel Hawthorne. Since then the lure of the camera has been irresistible. Other, lesser, parliamentarians decided to become media stars too. After all, it's so easy. There are only two rules to achieving celebrity status:

- 1 Dress up in a funny costume.
- 2 Do not consider anything beneath your dignity.

So here suddenly is the stout John Prescott, rough diamond of the Shadow Cabinet and aspiring deputy leader of the People's Party, zipping himself into a rubber suit and swimming down the Thames (attended by a flotilla of mediemen and cameras) eventually to clamber out at the Palace of Westminster like an outsize frogman. Here is the now displaced Alliance leader, the grim Doctor, persuaded to assume the football stripe and shorts and run around trying to kick the ball at a happier party conference. Here is Michael Heseltine dressing up in flak jacket and helmet to inspect an inner city wasteland. Here is that famous self-publicist Ken Livingstone winning more glorious publicity in his role as Buttons in the GLC pantomime. And here, too, is Labour's little-known environment spokesman, David Clark, featured in a range of glossy magazines, lounging over the Commons terrace displaying himself in an authentic green Barbour. Is this to promote some Green cause? No, he is merely advertising the jacket.

Meanwhile, back at Westminster, who is left to get on with the dreary but not unimportant business of running the country? Are all those unfortunate, unknown backbenchers simply sitting tight, dreaming of ways of transforming themselves into superstars? MPs have, after all, just voted themselves a comfortable salary increase at our expense. It would be reasonable to insist, in return, that they all follow the example of the excellent, if uncompromising, Dennis Skinner. The redoubtable Beast of Bolsover is so averse to personal publicity that he will not even accept a drink from a journalist, let alone dress up in funny clothes ○

Jane Ellison is a novelist and journalist



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